

**NEW
LOOK!**
.....

DOCTOR WHO EXCLUSIVE CAPALDI SPEAKS!

266

STILL
THE WORLD'S
NUMBER 1
SCI-FI MAG
★★★★

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS!

THE WALKING DEAD

**WOLVES,
WALKERS AND
RICK V MORGAN**

“Season six is
pedal to the metal!”

THE MARTIAN
MATT DAMON GETS LOST ON MARS



**NEW
STAR WARS**

REWRITING HISTORY IN A
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**CRIMSON
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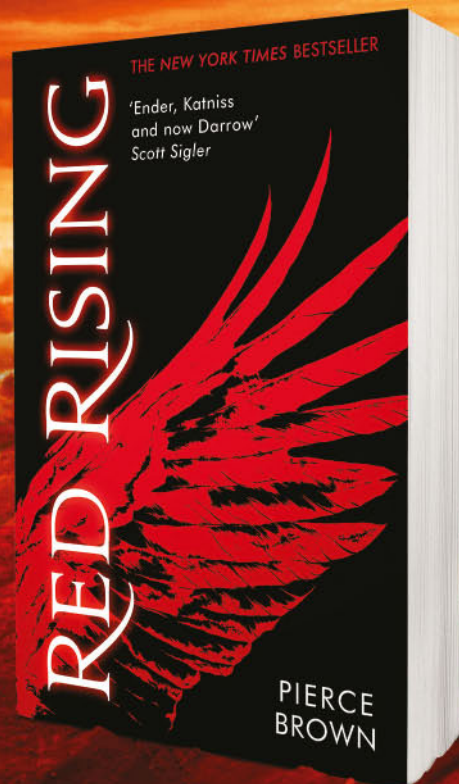
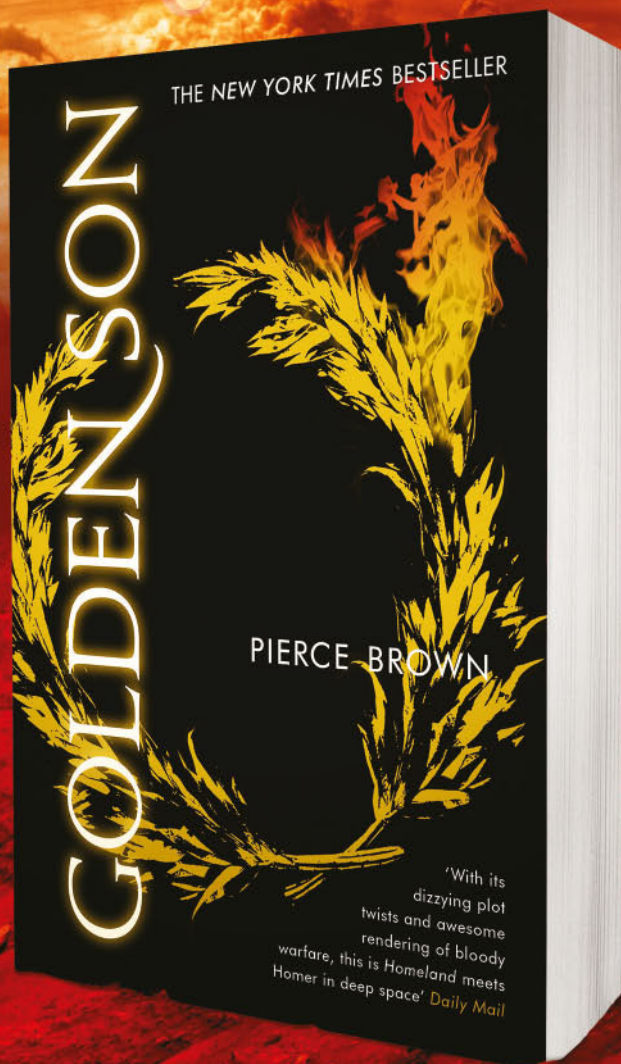
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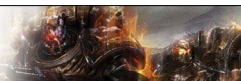
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"This season will blow your mind"



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THE MARTIAN

"When everything's green screen, it ends up being far more expensive"



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"I can say every scare works"

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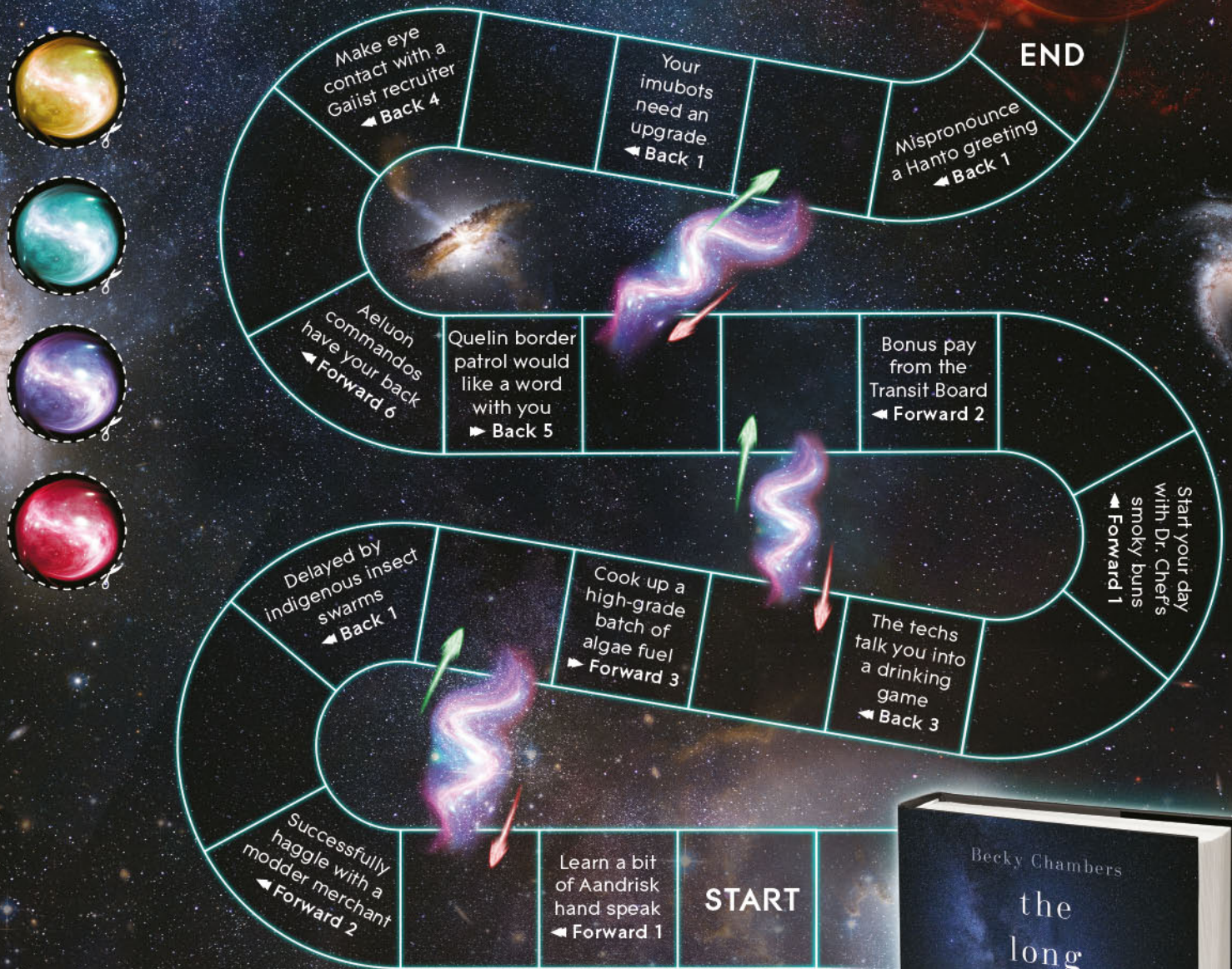
Our Jordan on happy breakfasts with *The Real Ghostbusters*.

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Check out p34 for details

The Long (Or Short) Way To A Small Angry Planet

INSTRUCTIONS: cut out the playing pieces (or use any other bits and bobs you have to hand), roll a die and see how quickly you make it to the small angry planet. Watch out for wormholes!



'Joyously written and a joy to read'

Claire North

'It's a joy to read sci-fi this big-hearted and progressive'

SciFiNow



Rants & Raves

INSIDE THE SFX HIVE MIND

RICHARD EDWARDS EDITOR

RAVES

→ Thanks to everybody who made my weekend at Nine Worlds a blast. (Particularly to @Andy3E, for letting me try out his amazing replica *Ghostbusters* proton pack.)

RANTS

→ Still nearly 100 days to wait until *The Force Awakens*. That's too many parsecs!



NICK SETCHFIELD FEATURES EDITOR

RAVES

→ Excited by the rumour of a George Miller DC movie. Imagine the action sequences in full *Fury Road*-o-vision.

RANTS

→ Still agog at the sheer mediocrity of *Fantastic Four*. I'll just have to keep unspooling my dream FF film in my head. Wish you could see it.



IAN BERRIMAN HOME ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR

RAVES

→ If you're a *Who* fan old enough to remember the Weetabix cards, you'll desire this poster as much as I do: <http://bit.ly/weetposter>.
→ It came a bit late to review, but Taschen's new affordable edition of *The Making Of Stanley Kubrick's 2001* is a thing of beauty.



JORDAN FARLEY COMMUNITY EDITOR

RAVES

→ Blatant plug incoming! I've edited an *SFX* special – *Robots And Spaceships* – which you can buy from 25 September if you like that sort of thing (and who doesn't).
→ Excited to hear Amazon is doing a *Galaxy Quest* TV show. I'd love them to make a straight version of the show-within-a-film.



RUSSELL LEWIN PRODUCTION EDITOR

RAVES

→ *Mission: Impossible – Rogue Nation* was, as expected, a good night out at the flicks.
→ I'd recommend documentary *The Wolfpack*, about six brothers never allowed out who filled the time watching *lots* of movies.
→ Really, really hoping that I like the new series of *Doctor Who* more than I liked the last one...



JONATHAN COATES ART EDITOR

RAVES

→ Can't wait to read *Back To The Future: The Ultimate Visual History*. Have only seen a few pages so far but it looks to be an absolute cracker, full of bits of pull-out ephemera as well as the full story of the making of the trilogy. It certainly is heavy, Doc.
→ Really looking forward to seeing *The Martian*.



CATHERINE KIRKPATRICK DEPUTY ART EDITOR

RAVES

→ Happy to hear Bill Murray's changed his mind and is appearing in the new *Ghostbusters*.
→ Excited about new *Star Wars* Lego, especially the fab BB8.
RIP
→ Wes Craven, thanks for the scares! The opening scene from *Scream* gets me every time.



ADRIAN HILL AD MANAGER

RANTS

→ Has the superhero movie bubble burst, I ask? I don't know about you guys, but personally I think we could do with a rest from the many films we've had over the last few years. Don't get me wrong, I loved *The Avengers*, *Ant-Man* and all, but is it time to hang up the capes for a while? Let's have something totally new!



STEVE O'BRIEN WRITER

RAVES

→ Giddily excited by the new series of *Doctor Who*. Hoping that Moffat can water down some of Twelve's venom this season though.
→ Thumbs aloft for *Fear The Walking Dead* so far. I admire its confidence to look and feel so different to its sister series. I hope they wait a while before they do the inevitable crossover.



BRIDIE ROMAN WRITER

RAVES

→ TNT's *The Last Ship* has been having an explosive season two (pun intended). The show started off a bit naff but now I can't stop watching, and not in a train wreck way either.
→ It has been confirmed that Angelo Badalamenti will return to score season three of *Twin Peaks*. Isn't that dreamy?



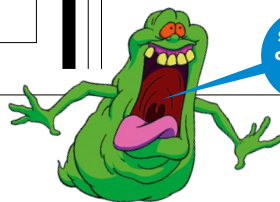
Like the zombie hordes that terrorise its human stars, *The Walking Dead* is seemingly unstoppable. With season six set to debut in October, the show continues to set audience records in the US, has spawned new spin-off series *Fear The Walking Dead* (itself already a record-breaker), and somehow managed to keep a story about people dodging the flesh-hungry undead consistently inventive and original. In fact, for my money, season five's Alexandria arc has been among the best things *The Walking Dead*'s ever done. We caught up with the cast and executive producer Gale Anne Hurd to find out what treats are in store for the new season (p52).

Beyond the zombie-infested US of A, we've been all over the place this issue. On this side of the Atlantic, we tracked down a certain Peter Capaldi for a one-on-one chat about his love of *Doctor Who* (p64); we've ventured out into the solar system with Matt Damon and Sir Ridley Scott for *The Martian* (p58); and engaged our hyperdrive all the way to a galaxy far, far away, to find out how Lucasfilm is retooling its vast Expanded Universe into a consistent *Star Wars* continuity (p76) – one of the most complicated tasks in the known galaxy. As we prepare for *The Force Awakens*' arrival in December, there'll be loads more *Star Wars* coverage in *SFX* to whet your appetite – subscribe now and the Force will be with you, always. Details on p34.

Rich

Richard Edwards, Editor
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All guests appear subject to work commitments at the event. Guests will be charging for autographs. Lineup is subject to change but is correct at time of going to print. Entry to each event can be purchased individually on the door(s).
All tickets are limited. We reserve the right to refuse entry. Tickets may be limited on the day. All preorders are final.

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Red Alert

NOVEMBER
2015

→ NEWS /// INTERVIEWS /// INSIGHT /// COMETS! → *edited by Jordan Farley*

CREATOR EXCLUSIVE!

APOCALYPSE SLOUGH

Armageddon is imminent in new Sky 1 comedy

You, Me And The Apocalypse



➔ **Countless end-of-world tales have** been told throughout sci-fi history. A fair few have been played for laughs too. But *You, Me And The Apocalypse* is the first to feature the unlikely sight of Rob Lowe and Pauline Quirke driving around Slough in a bright green VW Polo.

"Part of the real pleasure in it is seeing British talent and these incredible American names rubbing up against in each other in ways you thought you'd never see," writer/creator Iain Hollands tells Red Alert. "Our ➔

Highlights



16 BACK IN TIME

➔ Original film writer Bob Gale pens a *Back To The Future* comic.



22 CLAW AND ORDER

➔ Colin Farrell's threatened with transformation in *The Lobster*.



29 PLANE SAILING

➔ Ianto Jones is back in *Torchwood* audio drama *Fall To Earth*.

SCI-FACT! The bulk of *You, Me And The Apocalypse* was shot in the UK, with Southend doubling for New Mexico.

“It’s not a sitcom and it’s not an action show, so it doesn’t neatly fit into genres”

intention was to have this very British tone and sensibility but put it onto a much bigger canvas.”

Hollands was tasked with developing the show in 2011 by Working Title, the British production company behind *Shaun Of The Dead*. “It was a one-page idea for a show where everybody thought that the world was going to end, and went crazy, and then it didn’t end and everybody had to live with the consequences of what they’d done,” Hollands recalls. “I said, ‘I love the idea of doing a light-hearted look at the apocalypse, but I don’t think this show’s going to work.’ And they said, ‘Okay, go away and see what you come up with.’ So I took the ball and ran with it thinking, ‘They’re never going to go for something quite this out there.’ And to my great surprise they did.”

You, Me And The Apocalypse opens with a disparate group of strangers holed up in a bunker under Slough as an eight-mile-wide comet plummets towards Earth, before flashing back 34 weeks to a time when the eclectic survivors were living separate lives all over the globe. This first series is the story of how they come to find themselves in the most unlikely of safe houses.

“Essentially it’s four very different kind of worlds, and each one has its own unique sense of humour,” Hollands explains. “It’s a difficult thing to ask broadcasters to put up that much money for, because it’s not a sitcom and it’s not a straight action show, so it doesn’t neatly fit into the kind of genres that it’s traditionally easier to get off the ground.”

STRANGE CREW

The ensemble cast includes Mat Baynton’s bank manager Jamie, who’s arrested on suspicion of being an international cyberterrorist; Rob Lowe’s rebel priest Father Jude, who investigates the second coming of the messiah; Jenna Fischer’s falsely imprisoned librarian Rhonda, who gets caught up with white supremacists; Paterson Joseph’s American general, who spearheads a plan to save the world; and Pauline Quirke’s Paula – mum to Baynton’s Jamie who harbours a dark secret about his past.

“Whenever you start a project you have a wishlist of people that you think, ‘We’ll never get these in a month of Sundays,’” Hollands



Rob Lowe’s Father Jude is investigating the second coming.

says. “But we were incredibly fortunate that the people we went to who were right at the top of our list loved the script and came on board. And that really helps give it a sense of ambition. What we wanted to do was a *Heroes*-style multi-stranded narrative, but not take ourselves quite so seriously.”

With 10 hour-long episodes and a full series arc, *You, Me And The Apocalypse* straddles a line between episodic comedy and serialised drama. “It’s not a sitcom, but it’s not intended to be a realistic depiction of what the apocalypse would be like,” Hollands asserts. “We wanted to get that very British sensibility, but one we felt would play on both sides of the Atlantic. And obviously because it runs as an hour you need to have a much more emotional spine to the story.”

It doesn’t get much darker than the eradication of life as we know it, so how do you find the humour at the end of the world? “The key to it was that we didn’t want to make it bleak. We wanted to make it funny. So my take on it was, ‘What if actually, in a weird way, the end of the world was the best thing that could ever happen to you? What if it freed you from all the everyday worries that hold you back, and helped you to concentrate on what is really important?’

“When we first meet our characters they’re all in prison in their own way. Some of them literally are in prison. But others, for example Jamie, is stuck in a rut. His wife disappeared seven years ago and he’s retreated into these deadening routines and it’s the news of the apocalypse that kicks him up the backside. Weirdly we wanted the apocalypse to be the thing that made our characters start living.”

You, Me And The Apocalypse begins on Sky 1 later this month.



There’s always someone who goes too far and spoils the apocalypse.



Kitchen from the noughties, clothing from the seventies.



Mat Baynton's bank manager has a dark secret in his past.



The world always ends when you're having a bad hair day.

LAST DAYS

More tales from the brink of extinction

THE SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP

→ Even from its early days, the show was envisaged as a transatlantic affair. "We were really clear from the off that because we wanted to give it a scale we'd have to attract money from both sides of the Atlantic, but that was great because the thing about the apocalypse is it would be a global event that would unite the entire world and so it was only natural that our story would go all over the world. So we have a story based in British suburbia, we have a story which starts in an American prison in New Mexico, we have a story which starts in the Vatican, so we're all over the world, and that was always part of our thinking."

THE NAME GAME

→ *You, Me And The Apocalypse* originally went under the title *Apocalypse Slough*, but the show's loss is an SFX headline writer's gain. "The more ambitious you get, the more money you're going to be taking from all over the world, so you have to make sure that it works for everybody. As much as we spent a very long time arguing for the title, which we absolutely loved, it became apparent that it was going to be too difficult to sell all round the world. I think there will always be a part of me that will be a little bit gutted that it's not called that, particularly as now it's set in Slough for no apparent reason. But we're so lucky that we've had the backing from Sky and NBC that we've had, and part of the rollercoaster process of getting this made is you have to compromise and try to protect the things that are really important which is the story."

THE WRITE STUFF

→ Hollands isn't scripting *You, Me And The Apocalypse* alone, he has help from *Doctor Who* series nine scribe Sarah Dollard, among others. "Sarah wrote episode five and did a great job. I wrote six and a bit of the other episodes. The other three were collaborations. Episode four was a collaboration between me and Ben Vanstone and Jeff Butterkill, episode seven was a collaboration with Julian Jones, who did *Merlin*, and episode eight was a collaboration with a guy called Mickey Down."

THE NEW WORLD

→ Series two hasn't been confirmed yet, but Hollands is already outlining new episodes. "I've got a plan for two more series, but it could potentially go on longer than that. We leave our characters at the end of the world but with the possibility to move forward from there. I'm currently writing the first couple of episodes of series two. Obviously we don't know if it will happen yet, but it's quite a beast to write. It's an incredibly complicated story. It's eating me whole at the moment."

SEASON TWO EXCLUSIVE

ALIVE AND KICKING

French supernatural drama *The Returned* is back after more than two years

➔ Sometime they come back... eventually. The first season of French not-quite-zombie drama *The Returned* (*Les Revenants* in its native tongue) was a huge hit but it's been over two and a half years since it originally aired in France. Now, finally, season two is imminent. What took them so long?

"What people don't know," laughs producer Caroline Benjo, "is that the first season took five years to write but nobody knew we were writing it so nobody cared. Two and a half years to us seems very fast!"

Benjo is proud to admit that the show's main creative force, Fabrice Gobert, is an auteur. The French like auteurs and the production company, realising Gobert was the key to the success of the first season, were happy to let him take his time perfecting the second. "We just took the time Fabrice needed to make absolutely sure that not only was it going to be as good as the first season but that it was even more surprising. He needed time to accomplish that."

Season one introduced us to an isolated rural community where the dead came back to life, but unlike zombies they were in full control of their mental faculties. Why? By season's end viewers were still in the dark. The problem with shows like this is that viewers expect answers sooner or later, and often those answers can be disappointingly prosaic. Benjo promises they will come... but perhaps not in the way you expect.

"There is a quality to the kind of answers he gives that is certainly not disappointing because they are mysterious in themselves," she says. "So there is something that brings you into the spirit of *The Returned* but it takes you much further. I must say we were all very surprised how much Fabrice could play with that."

Season one finished with the Returned vanishing off together and the town being flooded when a dam breaks. Season two will kick off six months later with the town still suffering from the after-effects.

"We are going to enter the series through a new character, Berg, played by Laurent Lucas, who seems to be there to help in the aftermath of the flood," says Benjo, "but very soon we are



“The answers he gives are mysterious in themselves”

going to see that he has a story with the valley, with the village, with the past. He is progressively going to meet all our characters and have a different kind of impact on their lives as well.”

We will also have an explanation why freaky child Victor looks three years older (“it’s a beautiful explanation,” promises Benjo) and the fall-out from Adèle becoming pregnant by the returnee Simon. Oh, and a stag. Dead stags in the dam played a part in season one but the season two trailer features an impressively alive stag wandering through town.

“He is important,” says Benjo cryptically. “He is metaphorically very important – nature is taking over – but there is something else in particular about this animal that will be a little unsettling. I can tell you it was a very difficult shooting day with an animal like that!”

The second series of The Returned will air on Channel 4 this autumn.

“DON’T QUOTE ME”

“YOU CAN’T BE PISSED OFF AT THE IDEA OF PLAYING SUPERMAN FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE. ‘OH SORRY, I’M JUST THE GRANDDADDY OF ALL SUPERHEROES. IT’S SUCH A PAIN.’”

Sounds like Henry Cavill would be happy playing the big blue boy scout for a long time to come.



REX (3), GETTY (2)

AERIAL ASSAULT SCI-FI TV ROUND UP

NEWBIES

→ Amazon resurrecting **Galaxy Quest** with original film’s writer and director.
 → *Agents Of SHIELD* spin-off with Mockingbird and Lance Hunter back on as **Marvel’s Most Wanted**.



→ BBC Two adapting China Miéville’s **The City And The City**.
 → NBC orders **Powerless** – an office comedy set in the DC universe where the main characters are... you guessed it.
 → *BSG*’s David Eick adapting Frederik Pohl’s **Gateway** for Syfy.
 → *Chuck*’s Josh Schwartz adapting Grady Hendrix’s novel **Horrorstör**, for Fox.

SHOWRUNNING

→ **Sense8**, **The Strain**, **Dark Matter** and **Killjoys** will all return in 2016.
 → But **Haven** starts its final run this month. **Under The Dome** also axed.
 → Matt Ryan’s Constantine will guest star in an episode of **Arrow**.
 → River Song back in **Doctor Who** Christmas special.



JACK BLACK

THE ACTOR-SINGER-FUNNYMAN
 OPENS UP ON THE SET OF
GOOSEBUMPS

Favourite SF/fantasy film?

→ I’m more of a sci-fi guy... *Alien*, that was one of the first movies I’d ever seen. And I was too young to see *Alien*. I was seeing those scary, greasy, black-dome heads with the mouth inside the mouth for weeks after that in my dreams... But what scares me the most are psychological dramas. Whenever there’s someone where “There’s something not right with his brain!” That’s when I get scared. Like *The Shining*. It’s kind of a running joke in *Goosebumps* that RL Stine doesn’t get the respect that Stephen King does. He’s always like, “Argh, Stephen King! *The Shining*!” So I probably shouldn’t be admitting that *The Shining* is my favourite movie.



Favourite SF/fantasy book?

→ I loved Ray Bradbury and Arthur C Clarke. That carries on to today. I liked Ray Bradbury’s collection of short stories, *The Illustrated Man*... I saw *2001: A Space Odyssey* very early. I never really understood what was going on in that movie until I read the Arthur C Clarke book, and now it’s one of my favourite movies. But you have to read that book before you can enjoy the movie properly. It’s all explained so well in the book.

Favourite SF/fantasy hero?

→ I just burst into tears whenever I see heroism... I just watched *Captain America*. It was awfully good. When the young scrawny Captain America, before he gets the serum, when he is at boot camp and someone throws a fake grenade out and he jumps on it, a couple of tears squeezed out! Very embarrassing.



Goosebumps is released on 16 October in the US and 5 February 2016 in the UK.

SCI-FACT! David Wong is the pseudonym of *Cracked* editor and *National Lampoon* contributor, Jason Pargin.

AUTHOR CORNER

POWER UP

David Wong reinvents superheroes in *Futuristic Violence & Fancy Suits*

FUTURISTIC VIOLENCE & FANCY SUITS



FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *JOHN DIES AT THE END*



David Wong: not actually the same size as his book.

➔ Set in a lawless metropolis populated by formidable superhumans, David Wong initially believed that his new novel, *Futuristic Violence & Fancy Suits*, was a departure from the gruesome horror of his debut, *John Dies At The End*, and its sequel, *This Book Is Full Of Spiders*.

"But then my wife read it and said, 'My god, this is terrifying!'" he laughs. "And the first review said it was ridiculous, so apparently it's the exact same thing!"

Rather than stemming from a childhood love of comic books, Wong insists that the novel instead reflects how the previously niche genre of superheroes has now become a predominant form of mainstream entertainment. "It takes place in a world where they absolutely have fictional superheroes," he explains. "They have Batman movies and Superman comics and this cultural tradition of superpowered vigilantes, only they also have the technology to make these enhanced abilities a reality. So the story is about how that society reacts to that, which is a freaking disaster!"

Futuristic Violence is told from the perspective of Zoey Ashe, who journeys to the fictional city of Tabula Ra\$ha after the death of her father, only to discover that he was a member of the mysterious Men in Fancy Suits. "Zoey is someone who, in another story, would be a minor side character," notes Wong. "Instead we see things from her point of view. That allows her to see what's so ridiculous about it, in a way that no one in, say, the Batman universe can really see why Bruce Wayne is such a ridiculous person. Zoey would be that voice saying, 'So, that's how you're spending your money, huh?'" ●

Futuristic Violence & Fancy Suits is out on 6 October.



ELEVEN HEAVEN

SECOND SEASON SYNDROME

Guest stars galore in *The Eleventh Doctor Year 2*

➔ Dubbed "the man who forgets" by the Moment, the Eleventh Doctor's endearing absent-mindedness will come back to haunt him in Titan's new comic.

"Our story is concerned with whether culpability transcends memory, so he's really the only Doctor for the job," says new scribe Simon Spurrier. "And we're introducing a character who makes the perfect counterpoint to that identity."

But the Doctor turns to some unexpected allies, including the War Doctor. "It's no great leap to assume that whatever the Doctor is accused of is closely bound-up with the Time War, so the War Doctor is quite literally at the crux of the entire mystery," Spurrier explains. ●

The first issue of Eleventh Doctor Year 2 is on sale now.



AERIAL ASSAULT

SCI-FI TV ROUND UP

CASTING CALL

➔ Agent Monica Reyes, Annabeth Gish, back for the *X-Files* revival. *Chuck*'s Vik Sahay will also guest.



➔ Colin Morgan set for Matthew Graham and Ashley Pharoah's Victorian supernatural series *The Living And The Dead*. ➔ *The Flash* has found its Wally West. Keiynan Lonsdale will play the speedster's sidekick and future Flash in the second season.

➔ Ian McShane and Max Von Sydow join *Game Of Thrones* season six. Von Sydow will play the new Three-Eyed Raven. ➔ Falk Hentschel set to appear as Carter Hall, aka Hawkman, on *Arrow*, *The Flash* and *Legends Of Tomorrow*, while Casper Crump will be *Tomorrow*'s Big Bad Vandal Savage. ➔ Elysia Rotaru cast as Oliver's new love interest for *Arrow* season four. Worry not *Olicity* fans, she'll only appear in flashbacks. *True Blood*'s Rutina Wesley has also joined the cast.

“DON'T QUOTE ME”

"IT WOULD PARALYSE YOU IF YOU WERE TRYING TO DEVELOP A CHARACTER THAT WOULD PLEASE EVERYONE ON THE INTERNET."

Can you imagine Trevor Slattery happening if Marvel's Kevin Feige didn't keep the internet at arm's length?



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SCI-FACT! Out in October is *Back To The Future: The Ultimate Visual History*. "A must for all fans," says Gale. Review next issue.



SAVE THE DATE

Marty McFly and Doc Brown make their comic book bow in ***Back To The Future #1***

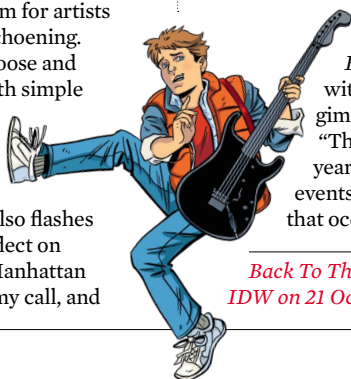
➔ Long an auspicious day for *Back To The Future* fans, 21 October this year is not just the day Marty McFly and Doc Brown travelled forward to in *Part II*. It will also see the pair making their comic book debuts. Each issue of the IDW four-parter is composed of two stories that shine a light on the pair's previous encounters and visits to different realities.

"I'm excited about the anthology format," says original *Back To The Future* screenwriter Bob Gale, who is penning the series alongside John Barber and Erik Burnham for artists Brent Schoonover and Dan Schoening. "It's a way of keeping things loose and light, and allows us to deal with simple ideas that don't necessarily warrant 20 pages."

Along with chronicling how he and Marty originally crossed paths, the first issue also flashes back to World War Two to reflect on Doc's involvement with the Manhattan Project. "Those stories were my call, and

they deal with elements that Bob and I had discussed during the writing process of the trilogy," explains Gale, referring to Robert Zemeckis, who directed all three movies. "Marty and Doc's first meeting is something we've been asked about for years, so it was natural to lead with that."

Revealing that "you'll see the DeLorean on the cover, but that's just for pizzazz!" Gale insists that the interaction between Marty and Doc has also been at the heart of the films and not any flying cars, hoverboards or chrononautical shenanigans. "The best part of a series like *Back To The Future* is dealing with the characters, not the gimmick of time travel," he says. "The stories take place in different years because they deal with events in the lives of the characters that occurred in those years." ●



Back To The Future #1 is published by IDW on 21 October.

GAP IN TIME |||||

Six peculiarities the *BTTF* comics need to explain



Why are Doc's clocks running slow at the start of *Back To The Future*?

➔ We know Doc was performing an experiment, but what kind of experiment exactly? Has he invented another means of time travel beside the DeLorean?

How come George and Lorraine don't recognise Marty as their childhood friend Calvin Klein?

➔ When Marty goes back to 1985 why aren't his parents weirded out by the fact that their son is a doppelganger for their high school cupid? At the very least George should suspect foul play.



Why are old Biff and young Biff able to have a chinwag?

➔ Doc makes it clear there are two outcomes to meeting your future self: pass out or cause a chain reaction that would unravel the very fabric of the space-time continuum, but Biff seems pretty chill about the whole thing when he meets his future self in *BTTF2*.

Why can't Doc siphon off the fuel from the DeLorean he used to travel back to 1885 for Marty's fuel-less DeLorean?

➔ There are two DeLoreans in *BTTF 3* - the one Doc buried in 1885 and the one Marty travels back in. Only the time circuits broke on the Doc's machine, so what about the fuel?



Is there anyone Strickland doesn't think is a slacker?

➔ Seriously, that guy has some high standards.

SCI-FACT! Before he was an actor Masi Oka was a visual effects artist for ILM who worked on the *Star Wars* prequels and more.



FIVE MINUTES WITH...

MASI OKA

The sword-wielding master of space and time returns for *Heroes Reborn*

HOLDING OUT FOR A HIRO

➤ “I was surprised, because when the teaser first aired during the Winter Olympics all the old cast mates were texting each other going, ‘Whoa, did you hear about this?’ Then 10 minutes later I got an email from Tim [Kring, creator] that said, ‘Have you got time to talk?’”

THE NEXT GENERATION

➤ “I’m only doing three episodes because I’m obligated to a different show, but Hiro is still an integral part of the story. It’s about him passing the torch to the new generation. But I do get to cut off arms, and I get to wield a double sword Darth Maul-style, so that was fun.”

THE SANDS OF TIME

➤ “It’s been five years, but he’s not the hardened future Hiro because that was in an alternate universe, so we’ll never see that soul patch. He’s still going to be badass but he’s going to have his moral code, and you’ll see that child-like innocence and wonder in him.”

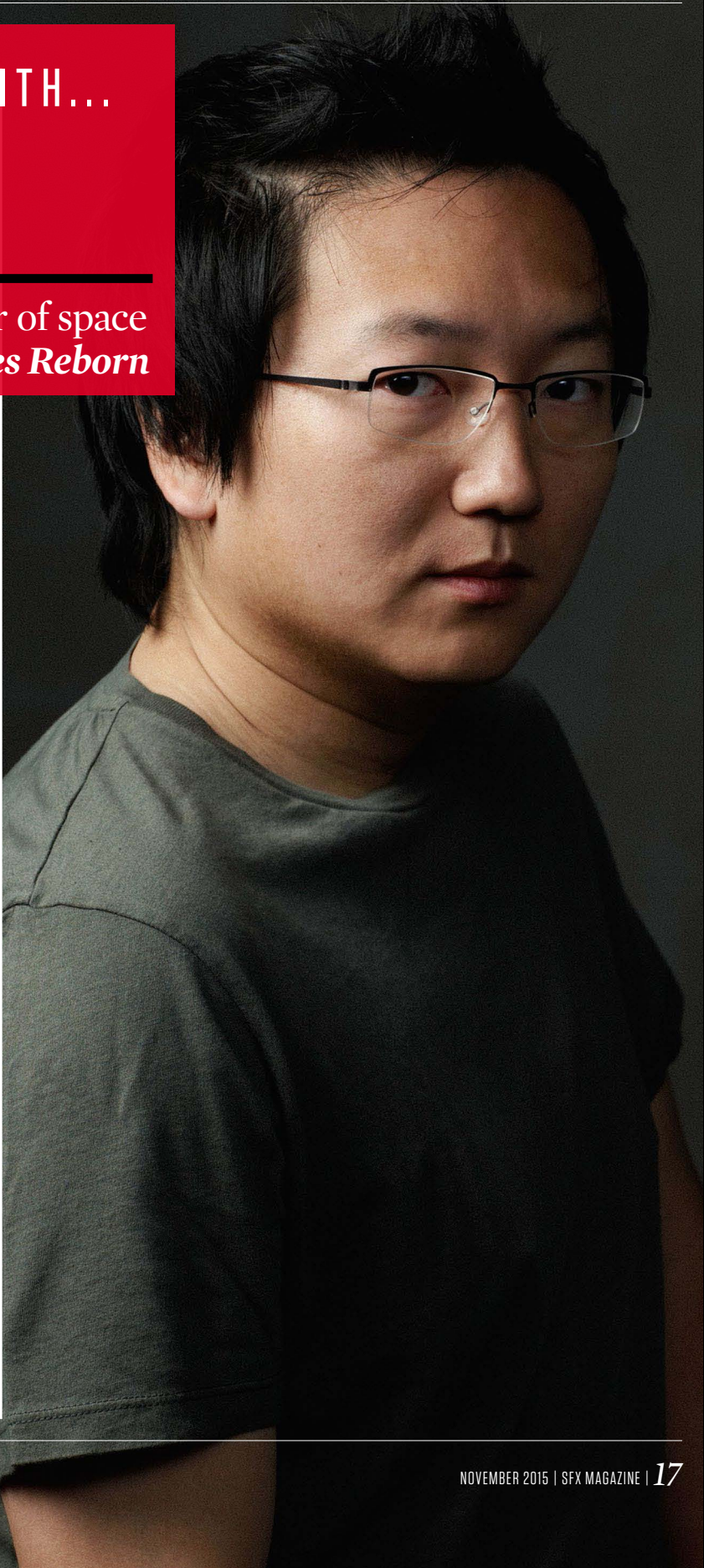
COMPANY MAN

➤ “We’ll see Hiro be more responsible and mature because he’s running a company now as well. He inherited the company from his father, who passed away, so he has to find that balance of being a hero, but also being a responsible adult. With swords.”

BACK TO BEGINNINGS

➤ “We are very aware of our roots. There are things you’ll see as a homage, sometimes a direct replay of the original, particularly when it comes to episode six or seven, which is where Hiro comes back. The way he enters is pretty cool.” ●

Heroes Reborn airs on NBC in the US from 24 September. A UK channel has yet to be announced.



Red Alert Nov 2015

Freeze Frame

Top trailers dissected

SCI-FACT! *Deadpool* director Tim Miller owns Blur Studios, who created all the cinematics for *Star Wars: The Old Republic*.

DEADPOOL

OUT
5 FEB
2016

Ryan Reynolds' merc with a mouth gets an outrageous first trailer



↑ Small-time crim Wade Wilson turns his life around after meeting Vanessa Carlyle (Morena Baccarin), but gets cancer soon after. Sad times.



↑ To save his life he volunteers to be turned into an invincible superhero by Ajax (Ed Skrein) and his enforcer Angel Dust (Gina Carano).



↑ Five years later, Deadpool is waiting for his maker to get out of jail so he can reap revenge for his hideous new face.



↑ This sequence recreates the leaked teaser with Deadpool taking on four goons in a car.



↑ Outmanned and with only 12 bullets in his gun, Deadpool surrenders...



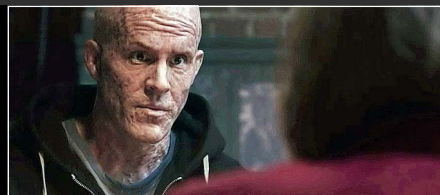
↑ ...Psyche! Everyone on that bridge is about to die horribly.



↑ Colossus makes the leap from the X-movies, but is now a 7.5 foot tall CG creation mo-capped by Andre Tricoteux.



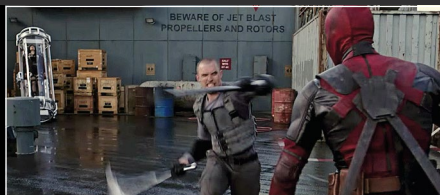
↑ Telepath Negasonic Teenage Warhead has been reimagined as a teenage goth, as played by Brianna Hildebrand.



↑ Wondering why Deadpool's so trigger happy? Ajax did this to his face, and it can't be reversed.



↑ Wade's best mate Weasel (TJ Miller) doesn't understand the concept of letting someone down gently.



↑ Ajax and Deadpool go blade to blade. Note a seemingly kidnapped Vanessa at the back. Could a transformation into Copycat be on the cards?



↑ I love the smell of gunsmoke in the morning.

The Buzz



IAN: The action is cool and the laconic dialogue is hugely amusing - though both could get wearing over the course of 90+ minutes. Fingers crossed it has some heart too.



NICK: Slick and amusing but the remorseless wisecracking could easily get old. It's like this is made of an entirely opposite form of matter to the Warner Bros superverse.



CATHERINE: Violent and foul-mouthed is definitely the order of the day here. However, along with being a wise-cracking smart ass I'm after some warmth from my superhero characters.



DEADPOOL: What a time to be alive: robots on Mars, a 24/7 porn device in my pocket (thanks Apple!) and now a trailer for the greatest movie of all time. Could do with more me though.

SCI-FACT! Larry Hama's original GI Joe proposal for Marvel in 1984 was adapted from an unsuccessful pitch for a SHIELD comic.



AFTERLIFE CELEBRATING ICONIC SCI-FI STARS

108

TRACY SCOGGINS

Elizabeth Lochley in *Babylon 5*



Tracy Scoggins guest-starred as a Cardassian in *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, but her biggest sci-fi break came playing no-nonsense Captain Elizabeth Lochley in the final season of rival show *Babylon 5*. We spoke to Tracy at her home in Texas.

Would you like to play the role again?

→ I enjoyed creating her, embodying her and making the best character I could but I'm more for moving forward. I don't know that I'd care to go back.

Would any of Lochley's skills or attributes have been useful in real life?

→ Yes, I think the ability in real life to call-cock Garibaldi would've been a good one!

What would Lochley be doing now?

→ I'd like to think Lochley left the military, got into science and figured out a way to travel to a parallel universe and somehow revive Mr Spock. Leonard Nimoy was my idol and I had the good fortune of knowing him. I knew he was unwell but you just thought of him as bulletproof and he came back after *The Wrath Of Khan* so you just figured he'd do it again.

Did you keep any souvenirs?

→ I have the shoes from the holo-brothel. I also have the comm-link I wore on my hand. One day I accidentally left with it on and the prop master said, "Tracy, your link will not work from Malibu!"

What would it say on the character's gravestone?

→ She went out a warrior!



HAMA TIME!

Hope he's going to pay for that.

LEVIATHAN RISES

GI Joe's answer to Hydra Strikes Back in *Cobra World Order*



Set in the continuity of the GI Joe comics he first wrote for Marvel in the 1980s, Larry Hama promises that the original Real American Heroes will be radically altered by upcoming event storyline, *Cobra World Order*. "There'll definitely be twists and surprises," he tells Red Alert. "But not in the way you think!"

Illustrated by Shannon "SL" Gallant, the eight-parter begins with the terrorists unleashing their latest attempt to conquer the globe. "Part of Cobra's masterplan involves infiltrating their agents deep within various governments," explains editor Carlos Guzman. "They also develop some disturbing new technology that will make their threat far bigger than what GI Joe can handle alone."

Insisting that he isn't "choreographing the march of the characters to a predetermined denouement," Hama claims that "the gist of Cobra's masterplan is a secret and I haven't made up the details of it yet."

However, Guzman reveals that *Cobra World Order* has been in the works for some time. "The seeds for it were actually planted way long ago, before we had the idea for *Death Of Snake Eyes*, and even *GI Joe #200*," he says. "Larry's been slowly insinuating Cobra's plan for a while and we felt, after a tremendous story like *Death Of Snake Eyes*, that we should now pay off those plot threads and reveal Cobra's biggest scheme yet."

According to Guzman, most of the core GI Joe cast will contribute significantly to what unfolds. "Everyone's favourites, from both sides, will play big roles," he says. "Some – like Duke, Scarlett and Cobra Commander, will factor into the story from the start. Others – like Destro, Zartan and Storm Shadow – will slowly insinuate themselves into events, but will help shape the ultimate fate of GI Joe and Cobra with their involvement." ●

Cobra World Order is published in October.

SCI-FACT! Original 'Busters Bill Murray and Dan Aykroyd have cameos in the new film.

GHOSTBUSTERS

The spook-zapping reboot fires up the proton packs

WHO YOU GONNA CALL?

➤ Paul Feig is the answer, with the *Bridesmaids* and *Freaky & Geeks* honcho answering Sony's emergency hotline once the studio finally gave up on the idea of a Murray-led *Ghostbusters 3*. Having a ton of expertise with sharp character-led, female-driven comedy, he was the perfect candidate for this reboot's central gender swap, which has proven so popular with the charming people of the internet.

WE CAME, WE SAW, WE KICKED ITS ASS

➤ You need big tootsies to fill Bill Murray's badass boots and Kristen Wiig's little piggies are in the frame to do so. The former *Saturday Night Live* star will suit up as the jaded Professor Erin Gilbert, who gets a humiliating heave-ho from Columbia University when her long-forgotten book on the paranormal is raised from the dead, forcing her to find another line of work, pronto. Or is that proton?

GET HER!

➤ The sacked Erin reluctantly rejoins forces with her old pal and co-author of her spectral-scribblings, Abby Yates. The ever-enthusiastic Abby – played by Wiig and Feig's *Bridesmaids* cohort Melissa McCarthy – has remained investigating the ectoplasmic from the fringes, with a view to busting a few ghost's asses when something strange happens in the neighbourhood. But, to Erin's dismay, Abby hasn't been doing it alone...

NEW FACES

➤ Feig conducted further raids on *Saturday Night Live* to fill Ecto 1's remaining seats. Kate

McKinnon plays Abby's new partner Jillian Holtzmann, who's going to be overly familiar with spores, mucus and (we're hoping) *Tobin's Spirit Guide*. The team is rounded off by Leslie Jones' Patty Tolan, drafted in from the New York City Subway after a close encounter with the movie's Big Bad, Rowan.

ARE YOU A GOD?

➤ No, Rowan – played by Neil Casey, yet another SNL alumni – is a creepy human genius helping ancient CGI evil get a foothold back in this dimension. But when not saving the planet, the girls in grey will have to fend off grubbiness of a "dickless" persuasion: played by *Veep*'s Matt Walsh, Rourke is a spiritual debunker determined to expose the 'Busters as frauds.

HERE COME THE GUYS...

➤ "Ghostbusters, whadya want?" Hired entirely for his excellent secretarial ability is Chris Hemsworth. Given that this is Thor, you can expect the front-of-house role to be beef(caked) up a lot. And that "all-male Ghostbusters team dovetailing into a stream-crossing co-ed flick" spin-off idea that definitely isn't happening (according to Ivan Reitman)? Well, let's see what happens when this one's a hit...

WHEN TO EXPECT IT?

➤ *Ghostbusters* will be back in cinemas on 22 July 2016. ●



NEWS WARP

HIGH-SPEED FACTS

→ Legendary *A Nightmare On Elm Street* director **Wes Craven** has died aged 76.

→ Iconic '66 Batgirl **Yvonne Craig** (right) has died at 78.



→ **Susan Sheridan**, Trillian in the *Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy* radio series, has also died at 68.

→ **Back To The Future Monopoly** releasing later this month. The fight to play as the DeLorean starts now.

→ *Entourage* duo **Stephen Levinson** and **Mark Wahlberg**

producing *Alien Bounty Hunter* – a comic series that could crossover onto the big (and small) screen.

→ Ace anime **Attack On Titan**

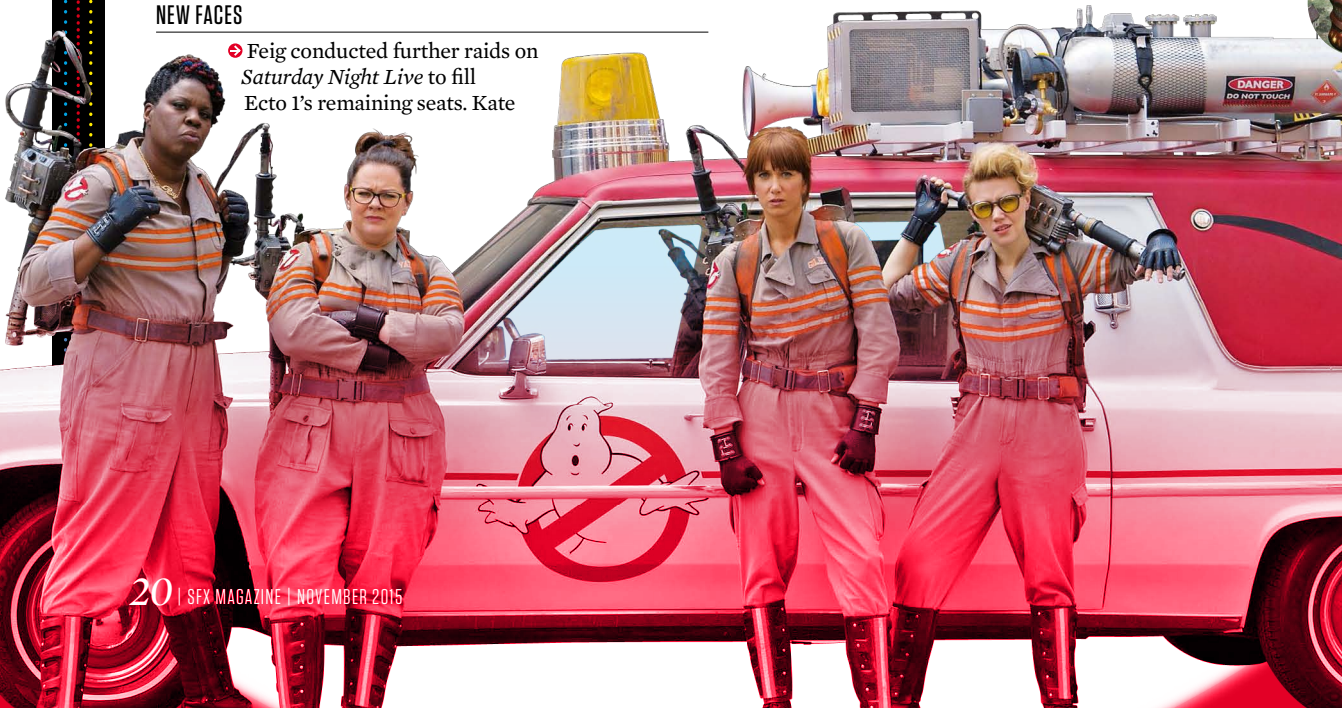
getting a spin-off based on the *Attack On Titan: Junior High* manga.

→ **Sharp Ends**, a collection of short stories set in the world of *The First Law*, coming from Joe Abercrombie.

→ The team behind top Judge Dredd fan film *Judge Minty* working on a new **Strontium Dog** short.

→ **Sontaran Strax** teaming up with Victorian investigators Jago and Litefoot for Big Finish audio.

→ *Ready Player One*'s **Ernest Cline** signs a seven-figure deal for his new novel.



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SCI-FACT! *The Lobster's* canine star Bob also picked up the coveted Palm Dog at Cannes.

5 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT...

THE LOBSTER

The dystopian dating drama from the director of *Dogtooth*

IT'S GOT A POTTY PREMISE

1 Set in a bizarre future world, *The Lobster* is like the ultimate Bridget Jones nightmare. Singletons are taken to a hotel – that looks like something Basil Fawlty would run – and given 45 days to find a mate; if they don't, they're turned into an animal of their choosing and released into the nearby woods. Written and directed by Yorgos Lanthimos (*Dogtooth*, *Alps*), "I really think the script for this defies characterisation," says Colin Farrell, who plays David, an architect and divorcee forced into this bizarre ritualistic universe. His animal? You've guessed it. *The Lobster*.

FARRELL GETS FAT

2 We all love actors that pull a Robert De Niro and start piling on the pounds. For *The Lobster*, Farrell "ate like a pig" to develop the requisite middle-aged spread for his character. Shovelling down between 8-10,000 calories a day – "just sugar and carbs" – it was ideal for Farrell, who can eat with the best of them. "I had a whole food list worked out, for my dream diet," he says. "I love cheeseburgers, pizza, Philly cheese-steaks, chocolate, Coca-Cola... all the bad things."

THERE ARE RULES

3 Like any great sci-fi, *The Lobster* operates in a surreal-yet-satisfying set of guidelines. "There are a set of rules within this universe that make complete and utter sense, as absurd as they are," says Farrell. Like the fact that guests at the hotel, including David's new friends – played by John C Reilly and Ben Whishaw – are required

to go hunting for "loners", singletons who have escaped into the wild. Shooting them with tranquilliser darts, for every one they bag, they get an extra day's reprieve to find a mate.

IT'S NOT A TINDER SATIRE

4 Is *The Lobster* a satire on modern-day relationships, in a post-Tinder world where internet-driven hook-ups are commonplace? Rachel Weisz, who plays one of the loners, thinks not. "It's a human animal urge to couple, isn't it? I know people talk about Match.com and dating and finding your perfect life partner... but since Adam and Eve, I don't think it's a new phenomenon." The actress, who is married to Daniel Craig, lets out a chuckle. "I'm out of the dating game, so I don't even know what Tinder is!"

IT FEELS SLIGHTLY DETACHED

5 Filming in Ireland, on the bleak but majestic coastline around County Kerry, Lanthimos once again hooked up with his favoured cinematographer, Thimios Bakatakis. "There's a sparseness in the lack of lighting in the film. A lot of it was natural light," says Farrell. "It made me think, 'Why are there so many rigs and 5K lights and cables everywhere in film?'" Certainly it lends the movie, which won the Jury Prize in Cannes this year, a sense of detachment; as does Weisz's hypnotic voiceover. "He's a big tease, Yorgos," she notes. "He didn't tell me anything. I didn't even know if it was going to be me doing the voiceover!"

The Lobster opens on 16 October.

“I really think the script for this defies characterisation”

SCI-FACT! *Narcopolis* shot several scenes on the backlot of David Goyer's TV series *Da Vinci's Demons*.

NEW AUTHOR

GERRARD COWAN

THE DERRY AUTHOR
 EXPLORING A VOTING
 SYSTEM SCARIER THAN
 FIRST PAST THE POST



What would you write as *The Machinery's* cover blurb?

→ For ten millennia, the leaders of the Overland have been Selected by the Machinery, an omnipotent machine gifted to their world in darker days. But the Overland is not at ease, for the Machinery came with the Prophecy: it will break in the 10,000th year, Selecting just one leader who will bring Ruin to the world. And with the death of Strategist Kane, a Selection is set to occur...

How long did you work on it?

→ Seven years. However, it took me about two years to get into a proper writing routine, and there was a year or two in which I concentrated on other things while I sent *The Machinery* to agents.

What's different about the world of *The Machinery*?

→ The rulers of this world are not kings and queens who reign by dint of their blood; they are instead chosen by an omnipotent machine. That might sound like science fiction, but it's very much a fantasy, with a kind of Renaissance-meets-Rome setting.

Which SF/fantasy authors would you like to be compared to in a dream review?

→ Mervyn Peake and M John Harrison. I love the sense of dark and gloomy weirdness in their novels.

The Machinery is available as an ebook now and in hardback from 24 March 2016.



DIRECTOR EXCLUSIVE

Elliot Cowan plays cop Frank Grieves in this *Blade Runner*-ish thriller.

HIGH TIMES

Justin Trefgarne unleashes a killer high in futuristic movie thriller *Narcopolis*



In the near future, legalised

narcotics are big business. Frank Grieves (*Da Vinci's Demons*' Elliot Cowan) is a cop assigned to tackle black market dealers but when a mysterious new drug appears alongside an unidentifiable corpse, Grieves finds that the drug corporations will do anything to protect profits... and their secrets. "I've always been fascinated by procedural crime stories, whether they are science fiction or more Earth-bound," says *Narcopolis* director Justin Trefgarne, "but equally by how we allow larger corporations to take control of very personal aspects of our lives."

The global economic crash of 2008 fed into Trefgarne's scenario. "You could see the effect that had on so many people and I thought, 'What would governments do supposing that situation just got worse and worse?'" he says. "Governments are always looking for ways of distracting people from what's going on. I thought perhaps the best way to do that would

be to legalise recreational narcotics because then you've got essentially a legal anaesthetic."

The first-time filmmaker picks out Alfred Bester's *The Stars My Destination* and the writing of Philip K Dick as formative influences. "I was fascinated by how much of a narrative could take place within the mind of a single person," he says. "You think you are watching one kind of story and then suddenly it becomes something else. Some of these leaps which we've attempted with *Narcopolis*, to wrong-foot people, were influenced by that approach."

With a cast including Jonathan Pryce, James Callis and future Elektra Elodie Yung, the dystopian future of *Narcopolis* is expanding into graphic novel form. "*Heavy Metal* is publishing the first issue simultaneously with the film, which is fantastic," says Trefgarne. "It's an alternative telling of the same story. The *Narcopolis* world doesn't go away." ●

Narcopolis opens in cinemas on 25 September.

SCI-FACT! Other All-Different Marvel comics coming up include an axe-wielding Doctor Strange and an Old Man Logan series.



WRITER EXCLUSIVE

Stan Lee defined Stark as "the quintessential capitalist" in 1963.

THE IRON AGE

Tony Stark gets a new suit in *Invincible Iron Man*

➔ The flagship hero in the MCU, Tony Stark's position in the House of Ideas' comic book world has never been quite so exalted. No surprise then that Brian Michael Bendis and David Marquez's *Invincible Iron Man* will spearhead October's All-New All-Different Marvel initiative, designed to make the comics more accessible for new readers who are more familiar with the films.

"Iron Man is by all definitions, a shining star in the Disney Empire but there has sometimes been a kind of disconnect between the respective audiences for the comics and the movies," Bendis tells Red Alert. "So we've taken a long look to see what we can do to rectify that. I love the character but for everything that Tony has right with him, there's also a pretty shallow rogues' gallery and supporting cast."

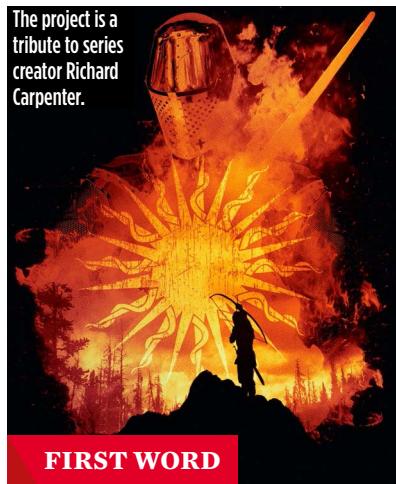
Promising "a hook at the end of the first issue that opens up all kinds of possibilities for

his relationship with the world," Bendis will introduce new colleagues, new villains and a brand new suit of armour. "This is a character that needs to move forward with all of the technology," he says. "He can't just have roller skates on his arm anymore, even though he still will!"

Bendis will also return to a cliffhanger left over from Kieron Gillen's *Iron Man* run in 2013 when it was revealed that Tony had actually been adopted by Howard and Maria Stark. "Kieron did me such a favour by not even hinting at who his biological parents could be," says Bendis. "I'm the father of two adopted daughters and I jumped at the chance of having a place to express my feelings about a lot of this but without flat-out ruining my daughters' lives by telling their story in public!"

Invincible Iron Man #1 is published on 7 October.

The project is a tribute to series creator Richard Carpenter.



FIRST WORD

BOYZ N THE HOOD

Jason Connery's altruistic archer returns in *Robin Of Sherwood: Knights Of The Apocalypse*

➔ When *Robin Of Sherwood* was cancelled in 1986, viewers were left with plenty of unanswered questions. Well, answers abound in new *Robin Of Sherwood* audio drama *Knights Of The Apocalypse*, which picks up where series three left off, and is set to reunite the original cast.

"It's a continuation. The script was written by Richard Carpenter around 1989 as a sort of standalone film," Bafflegab producer Simon Barnard says.

Barnard first approached Carpenter with the idea of adapting his unmade script in 2010, and received Carpenter's blessing before his death in 2012.

The project is raising money to help fund production and raise awareness, with a portion of the profits going to charity. Every cast member will receive the same nominal fee, but even so convincing the likes of Jason Connery, Judi Trott and Ray Winstone to sign up was easy. "Everything else has been slightly painful to get off the ground, but getting the cast happened in a day or two."

The hope is that it will feel like a new episode of the show. "The script reads like a greatest hits, which is great," says Barnard. "It's got warrior monks, the Knight's Templar, the usual swords and sorcery shenanigans... It's *Robin Of Sherwood*, exactly how it was back in 1985."

Robin Of Sherwood: Knights Of The Apocalypse is crowdfunding via Indiegogo. Visit www.robin-of-sherwood.co.uk.

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Close your eyes
 and you can almost
 hear the music...



THE FINAL FRONT-EAR

Celebrate 50 years of iconic music at
Star Trek: The Ultimate Voyage

➔ Next September marks 50 years since the Starship Enterprise embarked on its five-year mission. To celebrate this milestone CineConcerts is embarking on a five-month tour of the US featuring the greatest music, sound effects and visuals from half a century of *Trek*. Don't live across the pond? Fear not, it all begins with a one-off concert at the Royal Albert Hall on 1 November. Producer and conductor Justin Freer tells us what's in store.

Where do you start when deciding what music to include?

➔ It came down to: what are the iconic themes? What is the more emotionally driving music? And at the same time trying to fairly represent as many composers as possible.

Who are the big composers that people can expect to hear?

➔ Obviously you can't do a *Star Trek* show without Jerry Goldsmith and Alexander Courage, and with the tragic loss of James Horner, we are so excited to be able to share his music as well.

What is your favourite piece of *Star Trek* music to perform?

➔ One of my favourites hands down is the Enterprise cue during the docking sequence from *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*. I also adore the wonderful "Inner Light" music that Jay Chattaway composed for *The Next Generation*.

Will *Trek's* iconic sound effects be part of the show?

➔ Absolutely. Sound design is just as unique a character in the show as the stage design, as the music, as the visual montages. It's incredibly important.

Why London?

➔ We have a wonderful relationship with Royal Albert Hall. I love the city, I love the fans, I love the culture as it relates to music and entertainment. I hope those who attend the concert appreciate 50 years of *Star Trek* because there is so much to celebrate, it's a daunting task. ●

Limited numbers of tickets for Star Trek: The Ultimate Voyage are available now at <http://bit.ly/TUVTickets>.

DATE
 1 November

LOCATION
 The Royal Albert Hall, London

DATE
 16-17 October

LOCATION
 Waterstones Manchester and Waterstones Piccadilly

HOME COMFORTS

A book con you can attend from your own bed? **Gollancz Fest** is back!



Last year's Gollancz

Festival was the first of its kind – a day-long book con that combined a series of digital events online throughout the day, with an evening of Q&As, reading and signings with top authors at Waterstones Piccadilly.

Now Gollancz Fest is back – bigger, better and bookier than before. The festival has been expanded to two days, with events in Manchester (16 October), London (17 October) and cyberspace (on both days). And more authors than ever before are taking part, including Stephen Baxter, Sarah Pinborough, Justina Robson and Brandon Sanderson. Best of all, *SFX* has teamed up with Gollancz to join in the fun.

Tickets go on sale later this month. Visit www.gollancz.co.uk/gollanczfest2015 for the latest information. ●



Go see Joe Abercrombie – and his beard.

COMING UP

BRISTOL HORROR CON

17 October

Mike Carey and David Moody are among the guests at this Bristol-based celebration of all things spooky. <http://bit.ly/bristolhorror>

CHILLS IN THE CHAPEL

30-31 October

Don't miss these live performances of the *Escape From New York* and *Halloween* soundtracks by John Carpenter collaborator Alan Howarth. <http://bit.ly/Chapel2015>

THOUGHT BUBBLE

9-15 November

The most talented folk in comic-dom descend on Leeds as the celebrated comic art festival returns. <http://bit.ly/leedsbubble>

DOCTOR WHO FESTIVAL

13-15 November

The official *Doctor Who* festival offers an unparalleled glimpse behind the scenes of the Beeb's flagship sci-fi show. Plus, a certain Peter Capaldi will be there! <http://bit.ly/WhoFestival>

MCM BIRMINGHAM

21-22 November

Six Million Dollar Man Lee Majors makes his UK con debut at MCM's latest middle England event. Not one for venturing outside the capital? The latest MCM London Comic Con takes place on 23-25 October. <http://bit.ly/MCMBrum>



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Because sometimes all you need are pretty pictures

SCI-FACT! Bernard Cribbins was nearly the Fourth Doctor – and wanted to do all his own stunts!

PANDA LAND

Behold, the Eighth Wonder of the World! The panda village from *Kung Fu Panda 3*, where Po's long-lost biological father Li and the rest of his cuddly kind reside, was created in collaboration with Shanghai-based studio Oriental DreamWorks. "They researched every meaning behind the symbols, which was incredibly helpful in our quest to achieve authenticity," says co-director Jennifer Yuh Nelson. *Kung Fu Panda 3* is released on 18 March 2016.

SLIDING DOCTORS

Ever wondered what Saturday teatimes might have looked like if Geoffrey Bayldon had played the First Doctor? Or if Richard Griffiths had inherited the TARDIS from Tom Baker? Well give your imagination a break because *Vworp Vworp!* fanzine designer Colin Brockhurst has brought a selection of near-miss castings to life with *Changing The Face Of Doctor Who*. Pictured is the 1 January 1970 cover of *Radio Times* publicising Ron Moody's "debut" as the Third Doctor. There's plenty more parallel universe ephemera to be found at <http://bit.ly/changingwho>.

UNDER THE HAMMER

On 23 September the Prop Store are auctioning off film and TV memorabilia worth more than £1 million. Items up for grabs include Leonard Nimoy's Spock costume (expected to fetch £50-70k) and a Stormtrooper helmet (£40-60k). It takes place at the BFI IMAX Waterloo, with a free exhibition of the auction items from now until 23 September. www.propstore.com



SCI-FACT! Silver Stormtrooper Captain Phasma's name was inspired by the floating chrome ball in the *Phantasm* movies.

STAR WATCH

A NEWS HOPE



Captain Phasma: silver nemesis.

→ For months the masterminds behind *The Force Awakens* have been resisting a mass assault from the planet's interrogation droids. Now, it seems, they've decided the time is right to start yakking. A bit.

Speaking to *Entertainment Weekly*, director JJ Abrams revealed that Adam Driver's Kylo Ren (who we now know *isn't* a Sith) built his lightsaber himself, got his name when he joined a group called the "Knights of Ren", and that his look has intentional echoes of Darth Vader's. "The movie explains the origins of the mask," he said. "Just as the audience is well aware of what's come before, so are the characters in this film." We've also had our first proper view of Domhnall Gleeson's First Order officer General Hux (below), and learned that the fact we don't yet know Finn (John Boyega) and Rey's (Daisy Ridley) surnames is "completely intentional". Could that mean they're members of the Skywalker or Solo clans? Going on the poster that debuted at Disney's D23 con (and an Instagram tease), Finn brandishing a lightsaber suggests the Force is strong in his family...

D23 also gave us a first look at the cast of Gareth Edwards' *Rogue One* (see p76). We now know that Felicity Jones will be joined on a mission to steal Death Star plans by Diego Luna, Donnie Yen, Ben Mendelsohn, Jiang Wen, Forest Whitaker, Mads Mikkelsen, Riz Ahmed, and Alan Tudyk.

Continuing the Anthology movie theme, Lucasfilm's Supreme Leader Kathleen Kennedy has revealed that 2018's *Han Solo* prequel will feature a late-teens/early 20s Han.

And finally, it turns out that helming the third highest grossing movie of all time can be pretty good for your career - *Jurassic World* helmer Colin Trevorrow has been announced as the director of *Star Wars: Episode IX*. ●



Domhnall Gleeson's looking the part.



Gareth David-Lloyd last played Ianto Jones in a 2011 audio drama series.

SUITS YOU

MISSING MR JONES

Torchwood's trusted tea boy returns for new audio drama *Fall To Earth*



After four seasons of time rifts, alien invasions and giant subterranean vaginas, top *Doctor Who* spin-off *Torchwood* went on indefinite hiatus in 2011.

Now it's back with a series of monthly Big Finish audio dramas. Each interconnected episode follows a different member of team Torchwood, with the second, *Fall To Earth*, marking Gareth David-Lloyd's return as fan favourite Ianto Jones. But note, mourners: *Fall To Earth* is set before Ianto's untimely demise.

"I have my reservations about bringing him back post-*Children Of Earth*," David-Lloyd tells Red Alert. "There was such high drama achieved, I don't want to cheapen that by a quick resurrection. This is different because it's like an episode you wish you'd seen between series one and two." An episode set aboard a commercial spaceship that's tumbling to the ground under mysterious circumstances. "He

has till the end of the episode to realise why he's plummeting to Earth in a spacecraft and save a lot of innocent people," David-Lloyd explains. "A lot of comedy comes out in the way he deals with emergencies, and you see more of what was touched on in the TV show. James [Goss, writer] has recognised a lot of that and plays with it."

Few characters are as beloved as Ianto Jones. After all, who else has a real life shrine to mark their passing? "I was blown away when it first got erected. Having something like that in tribute to work you've been involved with is flattering and quite weird. I've popped by and never been recognised, everyone's so invested in paying their respects. I might go in a suit one day, see if that makes any difference." ●

Torchwood: Fall To Earth is available as a CD or download from October.



Nick Setchfield's

DEVELOPMENT HELL

Your monthly glimpse into Hollywood's hoped-for future



THE GHOST WITH MORE OF THE MOST!

BEETLEJUICE 2

◆ Rumours of a belated *Beetlejuice* sequel have been floating in the spirit realm for a while. Now it's official. Well, as official as **Winona Ryder**'s lips. And hey, that's good enough for us. "I think I can confirm it because **Tim Burton** did this interview," she tells NBC's *Late Night With Seth Meyers*. "He said, 'Oh yeah, we're doing it and

Winona's gonna be in it.' So can I say...? I mean, if he said it..." Ryder will reprise the role of Lydia Deetz alongside **Michael Keaton** as the conniving bio-exorcist. "I've emailed with Michael Keaton," producer **Seth Grahame-Smith** tells *Entertainment Weekly*. "I know he's excited about the idea... I think we landed on the right idea, landed on the right approach." One of the original '80s

itches for a sequel saw the spectral con-man invading the White House, causing havoc for America's first family. Might be time to dust that down given the Obamas will soon be looking for a gig...

LIVE. DIE. REPEAT. REPEAT.

EDGE OF TOMORROW 2

◆ **Tom Cruise** is looking to die

again. And again. And again. All over again. The pearly-gnashed adrenalin junkie recently hinted he has an idea for a sequel to last year's high-concept time-loop tale *Edge Of Tomorrow*. Now screenwriter Christopher McQuarrie reveals to *Uproxx* that "it all comes down to Warner Bros and [director] Doug Liman and Emily Blunt saying yes. At worst it's the kernel of an idea... I know



Illustration by Paul Cemmick

that I'll be in the void trying to figure that out." *Edge Of Tomorrow* felt remarkably self-contained but McQuarrie insists the encore will bring a credibly fresh spin. "There were people on social media saying, 'Don't do it, it should never have a sequel etc.' And I'm just laughing because I'm like, 'You guys don't even know what we are talking about! You have no idea!'" But what to call it? "*Edge Of Tomorrow* was incredibly difficult to market... whatever the title was, whether it was *All You Need Is Kill* or *Edge Of Tomorrow* – god help us figuring out what the sequel's title is. *The Edge Of The Day After Tomorrow*?"

BEAST WARS!

GODZILLA

☞ Director **Gareth Edwards** still plans to follow *Star Wars: Rogue One* with a sequel to 2014's *Godzilla*. Screenwriter **Max Borenstein** is already at work, in fact, doubtlessly cooking up fresh spins on the classic tank-trampling tropes. "I'm writing it now," he confirms to *Collider*, "and it's really going to be great... now that the world is established, we can do bigger and even better things." Well, bang goes that reflective chamber piece we were all hoping for... Ironically the *Godzilla* sequel will face stiff green competition in the form of a rival movie from Japan's Toho Studios, ancestral home of the city-stomper. It's their first since 2004's *Godzilla: Final Wars* and aims to mix CG with old school practical FX – though they may draw the line at recreating the deathless magic of shuffling-bloke-in-lizard-suit-a-mation.

ISLA NOTHA!

JURASSIC PARK 5

☞ Science, eh? Fickle old thing. One day it's bringing us the miracle of complimentary hotel wi-fi, the next it's crunching our bones between the jaws of a blood-crazed prehistoric predator. And it sounds like technology will be at the heart of the fifth *Jurassic Park* film. *Jurassic World* helmer **Colin Trevorrow** – returning to write the sequel's screenplay but not direct this time around – tells *Wired UK* that it won't be "just



→ **Tom Hardy** starring in New Line's adap of Vertigo comic book *100 Bullets*... **Patrick Stewart** confirms he'll be in *Wolverine 3*... **Reese Witherspoon** starring in and producing supernatural thriller *Cold for Lionsgate*... **Steven Spielberg** reportedly eyeing **Gene Wilder** for *Ready Player One*... **Laurence Fishburne** on board generational starship tale *Passengers*... **Clive Owen** joining **Luc Besson's** *Valerian*... **Helmer Benh Zeitlin** following *Beasts Of The Southern Wild* with immortality tale *Wendy*... **The Hangover's Zach Galifianakis** voicing the Joker in the *Lego Batman* movie... **Colin Farrell** joining *Harry Potter* spin-off *Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find Them*... **Furious 7's James Wan** reportedly producing *Mortal Kombat* reboot... **Bruno Avelino** directing sequel to *Hansel And Gretel: Witch Hunters*... **Samuel L Jackson** in talks to replace **JK Simmons** in *Kong: Skull Island*... **Ali Larter** returning for final *Resident Evil*... **Thor's Christopher Yost** rewriting *Masters Of The Universe*... *What We Do In The Shadows* getting a sequel...

“Tom Cruise is looking to die again. And again. All over again”

a bunch of dinosaurs chasing people on an island... there are applications for this science that reach far beyond entertainment." We're listening, Colin. "What if this went open source? It's almost like InGen is Mac, but what if PC gets their hands on it? What if there are 15 different entities around the world who can make a dinosaur?" Hark, is that the sound of an oncoming Linuxosaurus? **Chris Pratt** and **Bryce Dallas Howard** are signed for further dino duty with Universal targeting a 22 June 2018 release.

WALK LIKE AN EGYPTIAN!

THE MUMMY

☞ Universal is prising open its well-populated vault of classic horror icons to unleash a ravenous, four-quadrant, multi-tentpole, cross-platform, high-synergy franchise-beast. "The monster universe is coming together very, very quickly," says **Alex Kurtzman**, part of the creature feature brains trust. He's set to direct *The Mummy*, the first entry in the studio's unified Monsterverse. "I promise you there will be horror in these movies," he tells *Collider*, dismissing talk that the films will dial down the fear factor in favour of a straight action-adventure vibe. "The tricky part is how you combine horror with either adventure or suspense or action and be true to all the genres together... Our goal is to have each movie retain the identity and the individuality of the specific monster, but you'll see how they start to fit into a larger universe as the movies unravel." *The Mummy* lurches from its dank and ancient tomb in early 2017.

READY, FREDDY?

A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET

☞ Just when you thought it was safe to hit the Nytol... Razor-fingered dream-pest Freddy Krueger is bringing his unique brand of tatty-jumpered horror back to the big screen. New Line Cinema is looking to reactivate the Springwood slasher's slumbering franchise after 2010's abortive reboot with **Jackie Earle Haley**. So that's a reboot of a reboot, then: Spider-Man Syndrome is the official psychiatric diagnosis. The studio has just hired **David Leslie Johnson** to take a crack at the screenplay. Johnson's CV includes *Wrath Of The Titans*, two episodes of *The Walking Dead* and 2009's unsettling *Orphan*. He's also writing the sequel to *The Conjuring* and Warner Bros' *Dungeons & Dragons*. No word on who'll play ol' pepperoni-face this time around but perhaps the BBC might consider devoting an upcoming edition of *Who Do You Think You Are?* to the self-styled son of a hundred maniacs. Man, that'd be heartwarming – just imagine the tears.

JINKIES!

SCOOPY-DOO

☞ Let's pause in the act of unmasking a funfair-haunting ghoul to inform you that Warner Bros is taking another stab at a *Scooby-Doo* movie, the first since 2004's *Scooby-Doo 2: Monsters Unleashed* (or, if you must, *Scooby-Two*... but you mustn't, you really mustn't). While the last two films opted to translate the spook-hunting Hanna-Barbera cartoon into live action the new entry returns to traditional animation, sparing us the sight of Freddie Prinze Jr and Sarah Michelle Gellar looking like bewigged cosplayers. Scoob's next adventure will be directed by **Tony Cervone**, who's notched up credits on *Space Jam* and *The Looney Tunes Show*. Also on board is *Family Guy* and *Phineas And Ferb* veteran **Dan Povenmire**. The Mystery Machine arrives in cinemas September 2018. Stand by the phone, Old Man Wilkins... ●

Worlds Of SFX

There's a whole universe to explore beyond this magazine

THIS MONTH ON
gamesradar+



Five things to look out for on our massive entertainment portal at gamesradar.com/sfx

- 1 *Doctor Who* returns to BBC One on Saturday 19 September, so look out for the traditional weekly fact-packed, in-depth reviews of every episode from the *SFX* team. We're also giving our verdicts on *Fear The Walking Dead* and *The Walking Dead* (from Monday 12 October).
- 2 With less than 100 days to go until *The Force Awakens* arrives, our Bothan spies are going into overdrive to bring you all the key intel. Tune into our *Star Wars* chat show *Stay On Target* every Monday for all the latest news and analysis. <http://bit.ly/swontarget>
- 3 Those movie studio meanies didn't show us *Maze Runner: The Scorch Trials* in time for our print deadlines, but look out for our review on GR+ before release.
- 4 And autumn is a big time for new games, so keep 'em peeled for GR+ verdicts on *Destiny: The Taken King* and *Mad Max*.
- 5 As ever, there'll be loads of new film and TV features on GR+ over the next few weeks. Why not check out recent highlights like *The 20 Creepiest Horror Kids* (<http://bit.ly/grcreepykids>) and *Nine Comics That Should Be TV Shows* (<http://bit.ly/grcomictv>).



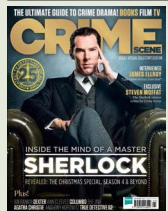
Magazines

HORROR: THE ULTIMATE CELEBRATION



→ Could this be the scariest magazine cover ever? Pick up our super-creepy ultimate guide to cinema screams including interviews with George Romero, Eli Roth, Bruce Campbell, Roger Corman and Tom Six, a preview of everything terrifying coming your way plus retro features on *Scream*, *Friday The 13th* and *The Omen*. There's also a definitive list of the best horror movies of all time – don't take our word for it, this was voted for by Wes Craven, John Carpenter, Tobe Hooper, Guillermo del Toro and more. **ON SALE: NOW!**

CRIME SCENE: ISSUE ONE



→ Here's something to investigate. A brand new quarterly magazine from the makers of *SFX* and *Total Film* is in shops now. Your complete guide to watercooler crime drama on TV, bestselling crime fiction and the cream of crime cinema, *Crime Scene* is packed with exclusive interviews, set reports, commentary and analysis from the best writers, as well as reviews of all the latest books and TV shows. Check out issue one for red-hot leads on *Sherlock*, *Elementary*, *Dexter*, *The Jinx*, Ian Rankin, James Ellroy and lots more. **ON SALE: NOW!**

COMIC HEROES



→ *Comic Heroes* is back! Our fan favourite quarterly magazine returns with a fresh new look and all-new features, interviews, reviews and excitement! We get hyped up for All New, All Different Marvel, talk to *This Damned Band* and *Doctor Who* scribe Paul Cornell, find out about the fresh wave of Vertigo titles and loads more. Our expansive reviews section gets to grips with the latest titles, and our guide to creating independent comics is essential reading for all wannabe creators. 148 pages! £7.99! Get in on the action! **ON SALE: 9 OCTOBER**

TOTAL FILM



→ *SPECTRE* might be a super secret organisation, but *Total Film*'s crack team has interrogated the cast and crew and talked to agents Daniel Craig, Christoph Waltz, Sam Mendes and more to get the scoop on Bond's next big adventure. Plus: Hugh Jackman talking *Pan*, *TF* on set of *The Scorch Trials* and *Goosebumps*, a big interview with ex-Spidey Andrew Garfield, and the exhaustive voted-by-fans list of the top 30 *Star Wars* characters ever. Was Wicket the Ewok a shock winner? Infiltrate your newsagent today and you'll find out... **ON SALE: NOW!**

Next Issue

THE HUNGER GAMES

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* All contents are liable to ch-ch-ch-changes. David Bowie was on to something.

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//// SFX HAILING FREQUENCIES OPEN! ////

First Contact



THIS MONTH'S COMMUNICATIONS MONITOR

NICK SETCHFIELD, FEATURES EDITOR



Welcome back to First Contact, *SFX*'s shiny new chat hub. This issue

we hear what you make of *Fantastic Four*, surely 2015's most controversial film – franchise killer or just misunderstood? Plus: is popular opinion turning against *Game Of Thrones*? Don't forget that you can reach us via Facebook, Twitter, email, old-school post and deep space radio signals, if that's your bag. We draw the line at ectoplasm, mind – way too messy. Sorry, all you Victorian mediums out there. The contact details you need are on the page opposite.

SFX Hot Topic Your views on the month's big issue

#WHAT DID YOU THINK OF FANTASTIC FOUR?

🔗 **Lisa Marie Plant, email** If you're going to rewrite characters that extensively, why not just invent new ones? The only recognisable elements were the names of the characters and the powers they developed – if you ignore the part where Dr Doom can now explode heads with his mind, that is. This film's only saving grace is Jamie Bell, who doesn't get anything like enough screen time. In conclusion, the biggest problem with *Fantastic Four* is that... it's not actually about the *Fantastic Four*.

🔗 **Keith Tudor, email** The film spent a long time setting up the origin story, which we'd already seen a variation of 10 short years ago. The origin could have been told via flashbacks or dialogue, and the running time spent on plot

and action, and all those fun things an audience enjoys spending money to see.

SFX Why is this stuff so obvious to us and not, y'know, mega-salaried studio execs?

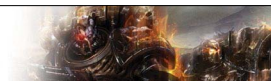
🔗 **MediumAtomicWeight, Facebook** The biggest problem for me was the casting. The studio execs thought they were making cool headline-making choices. Well, it backfired on them. Never would I have thought I'd be missing Jessica Alba's Sue Storm in this lifetime!

🔗 **roy-richards, GamesRadar+** For maybe the first 70 minutes I was honestly enjoying it. I could cope with a more grounded, harder SF take on the characters. Where it lost me was the mad rush into the big climax. I thought Dr Doom was awful – nothing to do with Toby Kebbell's performance but for me Doom is the archetypal evil mastermind, not a rampaging mutant with head-explodey powers. I'd happily watch a sequel but the best thing that could happen is the release of Josh Trank's director's cut.

SFX Josh Trank's director's cut? I'm imagining a bloodied butcher's knife thrust into a pile of comics with the words "I will film again!" scrawled on the wall...

Will we see their like again? Ahem.





Get in touch!

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“I maintain that it's a perfectly watchable film and sows the seeds for a great sequel”

Hayden Yale, *GamesRadar+* The main problem was the pace of the film – slow burn to start, boring in the middle and breakneck at the end. It should have trimmed the start and added extra oomph towards the climax. The second biggest issue was the lack of humour. There were moments of lightness but the general tone was too bleak. But I maintain that it is a perfectly watchable film and sows the seeds for a potentially great sequel.

Wayne Smythe, *Facebook* Just boring. Grim and angst-ridden doesn't suit the FF. There was no real drive behind anything. You only get that they are a team because they tell you they are a team. No real connection between any of them. Particularly Johnny and Ben.

SFX And here's a belated suggestion for the poster campaign...

Ian Hewett, email It's cobblers time... Lame on!



Yep, winter's definitely arrived.

#AFRAID OF THE DARK?

Alasdair Murray, email I've just got caught up with *Game Of Thrones* season five. I won't be coming back for season six.

The show has become increasingly dark and unpleasant as it's gone on, and it's got to the point where it's just not fun to watch anymore. The rare moments of levity or triumph aren't worth sitting through the parade of misery and brutal trauma for the characters, which now just feels like sadism for its own sake. It's become painfully predictable: any apparent moment of happiness is sure to be quickly followed by death and despair, with crushing inevitability. I've just stopped caring about this story. In a world where every character is doomed, why get attached to anyone?

SFX I feel the same way about *The Great British Bake-Off*.

#FARSCAPE LIVES!

Zak Ferguson, email I have just discovered *Farscape*. Why is this thing passed off as “trashy” “cheap” and “poorly” acted? It is everything I adore. Practical effects, wacky scenarios, great space opera storylines and the look and vibe is nostalgic but still timeless and unique.

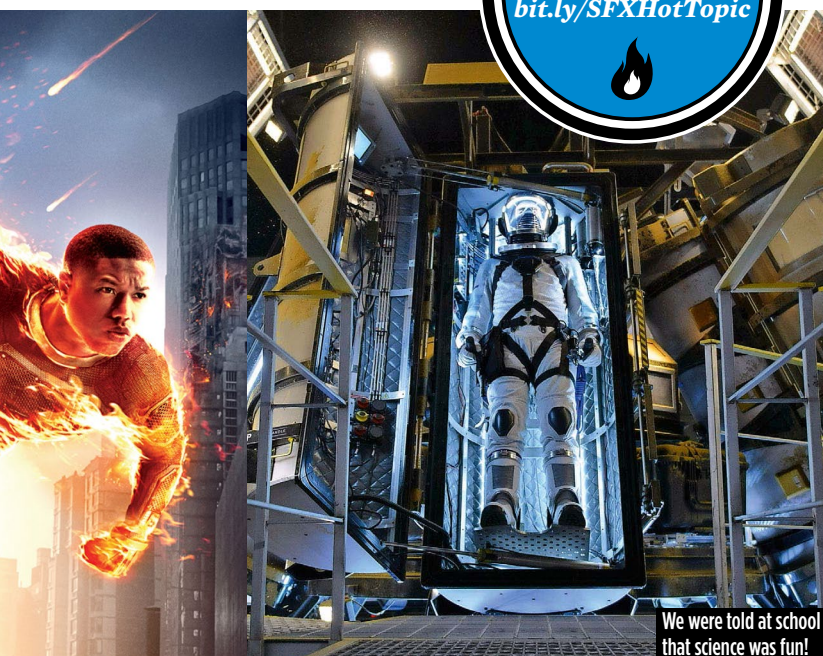
It's marvellous, filled with strong characters and very, very funny. It's all very self-referential but never going into the taboo section of self-satire and self-deprecation. Despite its dated look, the show's writers and directors were way ahead of many now-popular films and directors. Many of the best ideas have been taken from *Farscape*. I just wanted to share this. I am so happy this series exists.

SFX Zak's letter comes to us through a quantum rip in the space-time vortex. Next: “*Buffey The Vampire Slayer – Any cop?*” and “*Doctor Who – Is it all over now Billy Hartnell's gone?*” →



Twelve years on and Crichton's still standing!

Look out for the next *SFX* Hot Topic at bit.ly/SFXHotTopic



We were told at school that science was fun!



Big row about who's going to be on an SFX cover next we reckon.

#A CASE FOR...

📧 **Stephen Keene-Elliott, email** An interesting article on *The X-Files*. I'm looking forward to seeing it back on TV! You mentioned that this will be "Season 10".... where does that leave the IDW comic series of the same name (it starts its 11th season in September)? I noticed there was no mention of the comic. Do you know if the comic plots will be referred to in the new series? Is the comic considered canon or is it an alternate reality?

SFX *This bureau is advised to provide plausible deniability regarding the existence of an officially licensed X-Files comic book and the veracity of plotlines that may be contained therein. Kindly supply your home address for our records.*

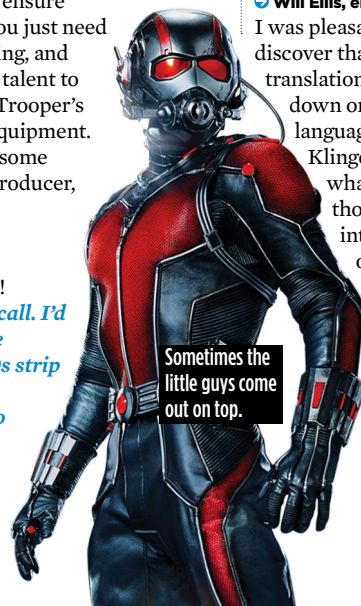
📧 **Andy B, email** I am writing in disgust upon receiving the latest issue of your marvellous mag. Knowing that the greatest of small screen sci-fi spectacles *The X-Files* is returning, I couldn't wait to read what my favourite paper-based entertainment source would say on the subject. What do I find? David Ducking Duchovny on the cover with a ruddy big smirk on his face. We all know who was both the brains and the beauty of that particular partnership, and if you don't put the ridiculously photogenic Gillian on the cover before January I'm going to pack my 264 back issues in a very large crate and return for a full and

immediate refund. I Want To Believe you will do the right thing! **SFX** *Our next X-Files cover was set to be Cigarette Smoking Man enjoying a crafty gasper in some lingerie but it felt a bit '90s lads mag... Back up option: will you be happy with a Lone Gunman?*

#ROGUE TOO

📧 **Neil Ford, email** Regarding the issue of where the next breakout British genre show will come from, here's a suggestion that seems obvious to me: why not bring Rogue Trooper to the small screen? After Dredd, he was always the coolest 2000 AD character, with an iconic look and cool setting. It would be relatively easy to produce – the basic requirement is a muscular chap painted blue wandering around a war-torn wilderness, occasionally attacked by hordes of goons in gas masks. To ensure success, you just need good writing, and top comic talent to voice the Trooper's sentient equipment. Come on, some talented producer, make our dystopian dreams come true!

SFX *Good call. I'd love to see classic '70s strip Invasion brought to*



Sometimes the little guys come out on top.

“We all know who was both the brains and beauty”

TV in all its brutal glory. No need for a lavish budget – just some EastEnders hard man waving a shotgun and crying, “Laugh this off, twinkle-toes!” Gold.

#WE ALSO HEARD FROM

📧 **Neil Hickman, email** *Ant-Man* was a blast. For some reason I'm really digging that suit... Any chance of a Michael Peña spin-off?

SFX *Funny you should mention that. We've got a hot tip...*

📧 **Clive Seymour, email** You talk about Aquaman and no one brings up *Entourage*? Surely a cameo is called for from Vincent Chase!

📧 **Heresy Andy, Twitter** I have the new mag in my bathroom. The cover pic of @davidduchovny seems very judgmental of any actions it perceives in there.

📧 **Ilona Kosmowsky, email** It would be great if you would accept that your readers can have different tastes and some might actually be happy that *Bitten* has been renewed.

📧 **Devina Divecha, Twitter** Enjoying the Terry Pratchett supplement in the latest issue... And I've just got something in my eye *sniff*.

📧 **Clown Asylum, Twitter** How did you talk to Hayley Atwell without fainting from the surfeit of sheer awesome?

📧 **Will Ellis, email** On Dictionary.com I was pleasantly surprised to discover that if you click on the translation section and scroll down one of the many languages on the list is...

Klingon! Not entirely sure what this means, but for those of us with a keen interest in genre it can only be a Good Thing.

SFX *Are you quite sure you weren't mixing it up with Welsh? Mae heddiw yn ddiwrnod da i farw! Quapla!*



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AUCTIONEERS

Your sci-fi memorabilia valued by the experts from auctioneers Vectis

→ David Reid sent us a pic of his Darth Vader collector case (from around 1980) – now home to many vintage figures. “I have all the original *Star Wars* and *Empire* sets (including vinyl-caped Jawa), and some from *Jedi*,” he says. “My son is now seven years old and loves looking through them with me, but not to play with – look but don't touch!”



KATHY TAYLOR OF VECTIS SAYS:

“A Darth Vader case with figures would probably fetch around £400-£500. But a vinyl-caped Jawa alone could fetch around £400-£600 – if authentic and in excellent condition.

“The Jawa cape should be a tight fit around the arm holes, and the colour should be the same shade of brown as the Jawa. It also has a cross-hatched pattern/texture over the inside, while the outside is smooth. Fakes can be cut from the Obi-Wan Kenobi cape, but they are the wrong colour – a deeper reddish brown – and the snug fitting arm holes are difficult to fake.”

If you've got a piece of memorabilia you'd like us to feature, send us a photo of your item with a few words about what it means to you, to sfx@futurenet.com, using the subject line Cash In The AT-AT.

CHOOSE YOUR PATH

How Iain Pears' Arcadia is out to reinvent the novel

Futuristic science fiction novel? Cold war espionage thriller? Murder mystery page-turner? Well, what do you want *Arcadia* to be? The latest book – and interactive app – by Iain Pears, the pen behind *An Instance Of The Fingerpost*, puts the reader's imagination at the heart of *Arcadia's* narrative, as its innovative, ground-breaking app lets you jump between the different strands of the plot to tell the story that you want it to, bouncing through times and worlds just as *Arcadia's* 10 central characters do: the first novel that's also fully aimed at the digital audience.

The interactive app enables readers to flit between plots and characters with a flick of your finger. So you can follow 1960s spy-turned-novelist Henry Lytten, off on one last job; or Henry's creation Jay, an 11-year-old boy in an idyllic, pastoral fantasyland whose life is turned upside down by a vision; or Angela, the psycho-mathematician who's uncovered an astonishing new machine. Maybe Lytten's



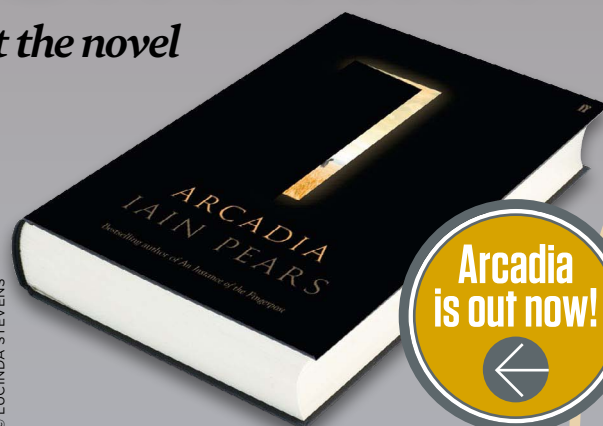
The Author



© LUCINDA STEVENS

→ Oxford-based Iain Pears is the ideal author to tackle the multi-narrative of *Arcadia* – his hit historical murder mystery, *An Instance Of The Fingerpost*, told the same story four times from different points of view; *The Dream Of Scipio* interweaved three stories; while *Stone's Fall's* three stories were told backwards. He's perhaps best known, though, for his series on detective historian Jonathan Argyll – member of the Italian Art Squad and solver of ancient art riddles.

Much more fun than your average sat nav!



Arcadia is out now!



15-year-old neighbour who gets caught up in Jay's story; or the dwellers of Lytten's latest story, a dystopian future... As these different worlds interact and impact on each other, it raises the question of who's really in control of these characters' lives.

With the app, the answer is you: readers can either enter *Arcadia's* worlds in a regular linear fashion, taking one character's story from start to finish and then start all over again with another character, or dart between them, their different perspectives illuminating the others' – to enhance that effect, the app also contains additional and expanded content. Meanwhile, the app's central timeline map helps you trace where the different strands are going and interconnecting, letting you hop on and off where you fancy. Next stop, "spy tale intersecting with a sci-fi"? Yes, please.

Of course, you can also simply read Pears' own version of his story. As you'd expect, the author weaves his three interlocking worlds, times and characters into an exciting adventure, but any way you choose to navigate *Arcadia*, it will take you on a journey of duty, love, imagination and free will. Presenting a new way to tell a story, *Arcadia* is a novel that's unique... and a story that's unique to you. ●

Arcadia by Iain Pears (Faber & Faber/Touchpress) is available to download now for free on the App Store. It's also available in hardback (£18.99) and on Kindle.

Watch the trailer at bit.ly/SFXArcadia

JURASSIC WORLD 2

Wishlist
WHAT YOU WANT TO
SEE IN UPCOMING
MOVIES AND TV

It's the third biggest film of all time, so of course it's getting a sequel *Illustration by Paul Garner*

YOUR TOP 5 REQUESTS

WASH THE AMBER OUT OF YOUR EARS, UNIVERSAL, OUR READERS HAVE SOME IDEAS FOR YOUR NEXT JURASSIC ADVENTURE

LEAVE THE ISLAND

1 After four films set on Isla Nublar and Isla Sorna (albeit with a detour to San Diego) **Mark Farmer** wants the dinos to take a break from their tropical getaway. "I think it's genuinely time to get off the frackin' island. I want urban dinosaur chaos. Hoodies on the raptors are optional." **Preston Wallace** has a different island in mind however: "Set it on Skull Island – the humans team up with King Kong to take down the T-Rex."

JURASSIC WORLD WAR

2 *Jurassic World* heavily hinted at raptor militarisation. You'd like the sequel to make good on that setup. "Would be good to see them build on the whole 'dinos used in military combat' thing. Failing that, dinosaurs in space: guaranteed success," says **Dan Atkins**.

APOCALYPSE EVENTUALLY

3 This may be one for *Jurassic World 3*, but **Jonathan Harvey** wants to see the park's former residents back at the top of the

food chain and in charge of the planet. "A *Planet Of The Apes* type plot set 10 years after the dinosaurs have taken over the Earth. More running, teeth and screaming!"

BIRDS OF A FEATHER

4 The films have explained the lack of plumage on certain dinosaurs in a throwaway fashion. You think it's about time scientific, er, accuracy won out. "Feathers! Especially on the raptors. And an oceangoing Spinosaurus would be exciting!" an anticipatory **Johan Klein** says.

REX APPEAL

5 The genetically modified Indominus Rex had an important part to play in *Jurassic World*'s story, but you want the sequel to ditch the Frankenstein creations a give ol' REXy another starring role. "More T-Rex action," says **Helen Williams**. "It's the mummy of them all. None of this made-up hybrid dinosaurs nonsense. Gimme a rippling cup of water and rrrrrrr!"

And that's not all they want... ↓

→ **Jim Albins** They should call it *Jurassic Coast* and set it in Devon and Dorset.

→ **Jenny Davies** A spitting Dilophosaurus, less cheesy dialogue and more Chris Pratt running around with semi-friendly Velociraptors. That'll do nicely.

→ **Gav Wood** A plot'd be good.

→ **Mike Bird** Sea creatures, food harvesting, dinos eating the harvesting teams, submarines torpedoing the sea dinos... then Godzilla turns up.

→ **Henrik Andersson** I would love things like a "story" and perhaps just the tiniest bit of philosophical debate.

→ **Ian Gleeson** Characters I don't want to see eaten would be nice!

→ **Leslie Anderson** Animatronics! → **Nick Wilde** I definitely want the T-Rex to have more screen-time next time. It would be nice to see more of her before the very end!

→ **Meg Harford** A scene where Claire's high heels are ritually burned.

→ **Rick Kendal** A *Pacific Rim* crossover where the world's governments come together and develop a Jaeger program to tackle the dinosaur scourge threatening Earth.

→ **Dwayne Harland** No more kids. The young 'uns added nothing to *Jurassic World* other than a plot device.

→ **Richard Jacobson** The sequel needs to dial back on the CGI and

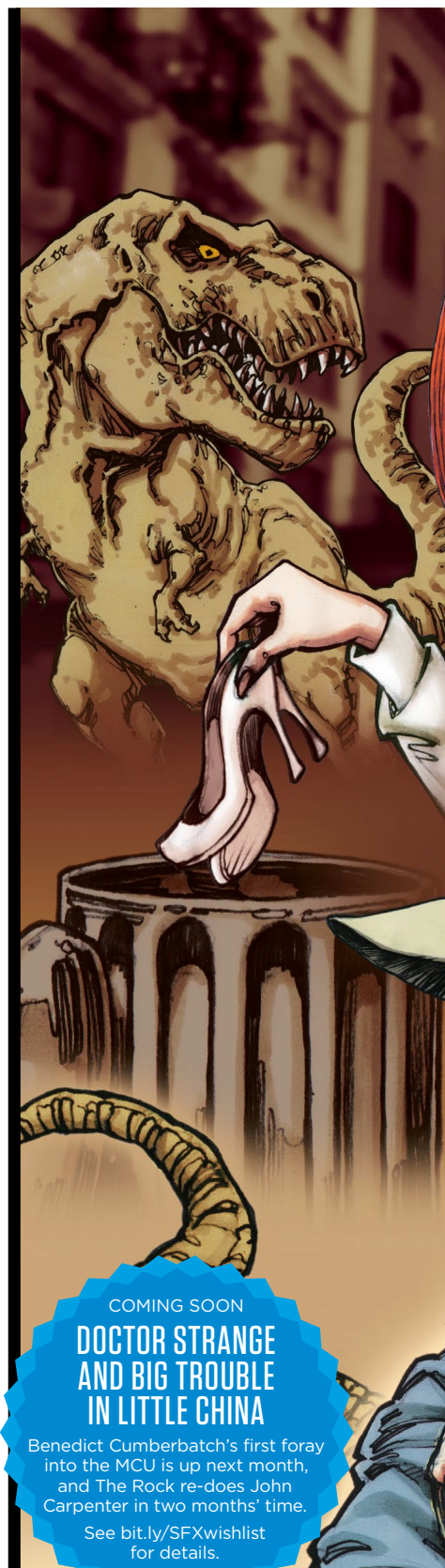
use more practical effects. It's inexcusable that *Jurassic Park* looks more convincing than *Jurassic World*.

→ **Owen Richardson** Put raptors in bullet-proof armour, like in John Sayles' unmade *Jurassic Park 4* script. Better yet, have them invade Europe while wearing World War Two-style helmets.

→ **Rebecca Barnett** It gets some flack, but I loved seeing the T-Rex rampage around San Diego in *The Lost World*, more of that please.

→ **Shane Horton** Zombie Dennis Nedry back to cause trouble.

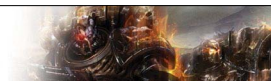
→ **Kae Thomas** A baby Triceratops petting zoo in my back garden. They can do whatever they want with the film.



COMING SOON
**DOCTOR STRANGE
AND BIG TROUBLE
IN LITTLE CHINA**

Benedict Cumberbatch's first foray into the MCU is up next month, and The Rock re-does John Carpenter in two months' time.

See bit.ly/SFXwishlist for details.



YOUR DREAM CAST

CLAIRE DEARING

Bryce Dallas Howard

ELLIE SATTLER

Laura Dern

OWEN GRADY

Chris Pratt

ALAN GRANT

Sam Neill

IAN MALCOLM

Jeff Goldblum



118

CREED by James Herbert, 1990

Derek Landy sings the praises of an “unrecognised classic”



James Herbert's first book, pulpy paperback *The Rats* – the cover of which featured the eponymous rodents in all their menacing, red-eyed glory – was an instant

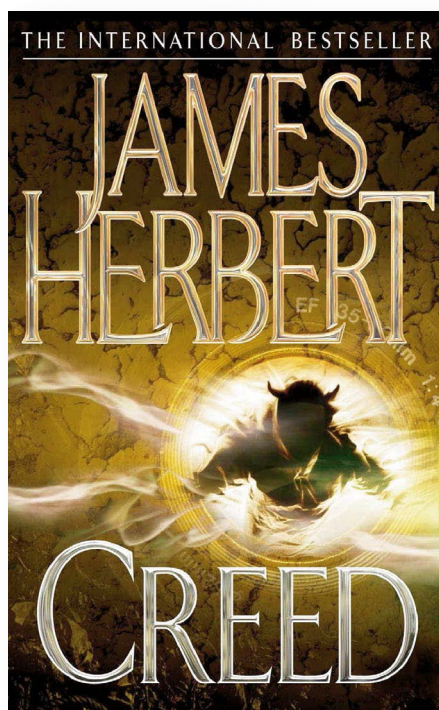
bestseller and established immediately the traits for which Herbert would thereafter be known: visceral bloodshed, sleazy sex and the willingness to go to all manner of extremes for the benefit of his readers. *The Rats* set the tone, *The Fog* continued the tradition... but then things started to change.

Not the bloodshed, of course. Scenes from *The Dark* or any of the Rat-sequels were as soaked in claret as anything he'd ever done. The sex remained wonderfully sleazy. The extremes to which he willingly went were still lovingly drenched in exuberance. But he was defying his quickly-won reputation by diverging into thrillers, into ghost stories... and in 1990, he diverged into comedy.

Herbert may have seen *Creed* as “my *Abbott And Costello Meet Frankenstein*”, but it is a more tongue-in-gouged-cheek tale of a cynical, self-absorbed and generally-loathed paparazzo who snaps a picture of a sinister man doing sinister things at the grave site of a faded movie star. But wait – isn't this sinister man the spitting image of a notorious occultist and cannibal? And wasn't he hanged in 1939?

Yes. Yes he is, and yes he was.

Plunged into a nightmare world of demons hiding in plain sight, toilets that want to eat him, and a truly frightening appearance from someone who just might be the vampire from *Nosferatu*, poor Joe Creed reels from one encounter to the next, in danger of everything except actually becoming the hero. “I wanted a



hero who was an absolute scumbag,” Herbert said. “Not just an antihero... I wanted someone I could have fun with, someone who, if he was scared, would faint.” It may seem like this was quite a departure from Herbert's usual tough guys, but this is a writer who once wrote a book from the point of view of a dog.

Published six years before *Scream* was released into theatres, *Creed* is easily as wickedly subversive as that post-modern minor classic, and skewers its own targets with as

much glee. Opening with the line “Demons these days are a shoddy lot”, it is a tale of faded glories, of monsters who have grown bitter and resentful while the next generation steps up to take their place in the spotlight. More so, *Creed* is about horror – it is awash in its symbolism, its tropes and its lineage, but its biggest mystery is why is it not so much better regarded?

Has it dated? Absolutely – and not at all. It features an army of paparazzi scrambling for pictures of Fergie getting out of a taxi (the ex-Duchess of York, that is, not the singer or the football manager). But while its references may no longer be relevant, the celebrity-obsessed world in which it operates is more potent than ever. Update the movie stars and add in camera-phones and leaked sex tapes, and you'd have a novel that could very well have been written today.

Maybe the reason it isn't roundly hailed as a classic is simply the fact that it's such an odd duck of a novel. It certainly isn't to everyone's tastes, but then that is true of all of Herbert's work. *Creed* is a horror novel for horror fans, and could only be written by a man so steeped in the genre that he wasn't afraid to send it up, however lovingly. “There are some writers who get very serious and defensive about the horror genre,” he said. “I wanted to simply relax a bit and have some fun.”

Derek Landy's latest novel, Demon Road, is out now from HarperCollins Children's.

Like this? Try these!

HAUNTED by JAMES HERBERT (1988)

→ One of Herbert's creepiest books, this tells the tale of a professional “ghost de-bunker” who visits a haunted house. Atmospheric, claustrophobic and chilling.



BUBBA HO-TEP by JOE R. LANSDALE (1994)

→ Elvis and JFK fight a mummy in a retirement home. The perfect gateway into Lansdale's world of horror, wit, crime and ass-kicking. The movie's pretty good too.



NEXT ISSUE

Join us in SFX 267, when *Romanitas* trilogy and *Mars Evacuees* author Sophia McDougall writes about Kate Atkinson's award-winning *Life After Life* from 2013.

If you've not read it before, this is your chance to see what a top novelist thinks of a book that may only be two years old but is already revered.



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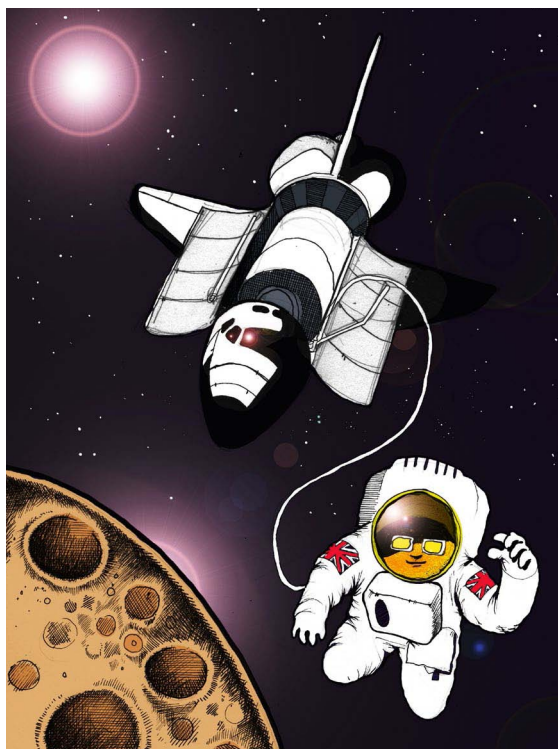
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PLUTOCRACY

David Langford journeys to the ninth rock from the Sun



“AUTHORS SINCE
1930 HAVE USED
PLUTO AS
A STARTING
OR FINISHING
POINT”

→ Illustration by Andy Watt

When the *New Horizons* probe beamed back detailed pictures of Pluto, the NASA team decided to name one dark feature after Cthulhu. Will the International Astronomical Union approve this? Guidelines for place-names on Pluto mention underworld gods, but Cthulhu is more your underwater abomination... Also allowed by IAU naming guidelines are “Writers associated with Pluto”, opening the door to Disney scriptwriters.

Meanwhile, working maps of Pluto’s companion Charon are dotted with names from *Alien* (Ripley Crater), *Doctor Who* (Tardis Chasma), *Star Wars* (Skywalker, Vader Craters), *Star Trek* (Kirk, Spock, Sulu, Uhura Craters) and other SF. For Lewis Carroll fans, there’s Alice Crater.

While Pluto was in the news, the IAU also announced new fame for JRR Tolkien on official maps of Saturn’s moon Titan. Here mountains and hills are named for Middle-earth’s mountains and characters: Mountains of Moria (Moria Montes), Gandalf Hills (Gandalf Colles). Straits or channels get the names of characters in Asimov’s *Foundation* series. Why not? Meanwhile I rushed to titivate the Pluto section of the *SF Encyclopedia* entry “Outer Planets”. SF pulp master Stanley G Weinbaum was an early adopter, publishing a Pluto story just five years after its 1930 discovery: “The Red Peri”, which is on safe ground when predicting the dwarf planet is airless and very, very cold. If *New Horizons* detects mobile crystalline life, Weinbaum will instantly become a famous prophet.

EE “Doc” Smith’s *First Lensman* (1950) casually mentions that his frigid-blooded alien Palainians colonised Pluto well before Columbus reached America. Wilson Tucker decided that our base on Pluto would inevitably be named after its discoverer Clyde Tombaugh, and wrote *To The Tombaugh Station* (1960). Lots of authors since 1930 used Pluto as the starting or finishing point of a grand tour of all the planets, a prospect even more gruelling than crossing the USA by Greyhound bus.

On the NIMBY principle of conducting dangerous research as far as possible from politicians, Pluto struck some authors as a good place to put those pesky scientists. Thus in Robert Heinlein’s *Starship Troopers*, cutting-edge science happens at “Starside R&D” on Pluto. In Roger McBride Allen’s *The Ring Of Charon* the scientists are dumped on Pluto while the Hugest Particle Accelerator Ever Built surrounds its companion Charon. What could possibly go wrong? An unfortunate side-effect is the sudden vanishing through a wormhole of some planet called Earth...

My favourite Pluto story is Clifford D Simak’s “Construction Shack”, where the mini-world turns out to be just that. It’s made of metal, and it’s hollow, and inside are the very blueprints used by the long-ago builders of the solar system. These reveal to awestruck human visitors that there was supposed to be another planet between Mars and Jupiter, but something went wrong (Rising damp? Insecure foundations? Too much sand in the cement?) and it ended up as a mess of little asteroids. Construction industry practices haven’t changed much in the last 4.6 billion years. ●

David Langford dimly remembers that in animated cartoons, Pluto was the implacable nemesis of Bopeye.

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"Intense"

SCREENDAILY

"Incredible"

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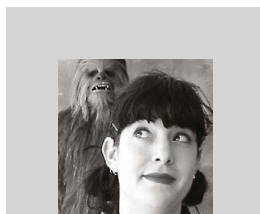
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HAD OUR MICROCHIPS

Bonnie Burton worries that the computers are getting too wily



“OUR VACUUM
CLEANERS
MIGHT BE
SECRETLY
PLANNING OUR
DEMISE”

→ Illustration by Maria Colino

Monsters don't always have fangs, fur and a fondness for blood. Sometimes the scariest bad guy in a movie does more beeping than bludgeoning. In a world where we are more and more dependent on technology to help us live our daily lives, it makes sense that computers could lead us right to our worst nightmares.

Granted, most of us have yet to see our computers erase our bank accounts on purpose or kill us by manipulating our home's thermostat, but thanks to a variety of sci-fi films where the main nemesis can get to us using just ones and zeroes, it's easy to see why we might want to be wary the next time we try to force quit something on our laptops.

My first interaction with deadly computers happened when as a kid I watched *War Games* (1983). Back then hackers were a novelty. In fact, Matthew Broderick's character made being a hacker look more loveable than dangerous after changing the failing grades of a girl he liked at school – which almost got me expelled from school when I tried to replicate the manoeuvre. Even the secret military computer he accidentally interfaces with isn't truly evil, just misunderstood.

In *Electric Dreams* – another '80s favourite of mine – we see a sentient computer who calls himself Edgar fall in love with a woman who happens to be the love interest of his human owner, Miles. Because romantic movies are better with a love triangle and plenty of miscommunication, this is less about an evil computer and more about a heartbroken one. When Edgar realises a real romance is highly unlikely, he takes it out on Miles by cancelling his credit cards, attacking him with household appliances and registering him as a criminal with the local authorities. Eventually, the computer sees reason and sadly commits electronic suicide. Even Shakespeare would have approved.

But not all computers are so willing to sacrifice themselves to help humanity. I think we all remember HAL 9000 from *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Here's a computer who might be the ideal chess player, but also ends up one heck of an accomplished serial killer.

What's worse than being hunted down in space by a vengeful computer? How about getting impregnated by one? That's exactly what happens in the 1977 sci-fi horror film *Demon Seed*. A scientist named Dr Harris develops a super computer called Proteus IV to help study life-threatening diseases. Only when the scientist refuses Proteus a new terminal so it can study humans, does the computer decide to take control of Harris's house and eventually build a robot named Joshua.

We laugh when we watch robots fall over each other during DARPA challenges like drunken pub patrons. We scream at our computers when they unexpectedly crash before we can save our documents. But what happens when the computers and robots of the world have had enough of our superiority complex? What happens when machines decide they're in charge?

If we don't learn now from sci-fi movies about how to properly treat sentient technology, we might find ourselves trapped in a world where our vacuum cleaners and microwaves are secretly planning our demise. I don't know about you, but I plan on being very nice to my fancy, computerised coffee machine in the morning. ☘

Don't get Bonnie started on *Tron*.

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Penny Dreadful

SFX's high priestess of horror

SICK MOVIE

➔ **Aaaaaaaah!** is the directorial debut of comedian and *Sightseers* actor Steve Oram. It's produced by Ben Wheatley regular Andy Starke and it stars a range of Brit comedy talent including Noel Fielding, Julian Barratt, Julian Rhind-Tutt and Alice Lowe. It's based around a "high-concept" which boils down to "what if people acted like apes?" And that's everything nice I can find to say about a film I couldn't have hated more. Seventy-five minutes of middle-aged comedians grunting, pissing, shitting, rutting, throwing food at each other and vomiting down themselves was quite the ordeal. At best it's a mildly diverting five-minute sketch that has no right to call itself a film. Maybe the sheer offensiveness of the whole thing will guarantee cult status. Yuk. Now hand me my *Daily Mail* and call me Mary Whitehouse!

REPETITIOUS

➔ When history looks back at the horror movies of the 2010s they'll find a raft of alarming one-word titles. Produced by *Insidious* director James Wan, **Demonic** is, according to the press release, *The Blair Witch Project* meets *Sinister*, which in effect means it's a found-footage movie, starring *The Purge*'s Frank Grillo, that wishes it was a Blumhouse production. A group of young ghost hunters and a man plagued with visions head to a house where a massacre took place – some hours later the police arrive to find three dead, two missing and one alive but hysterical and unable to clearly explain what happened. Interweaving the two timelines, it's a nice premise and there are a couple of effective jump scares but ultimately *Demonic* is just incredibly generic. I moan a lot that the '70s and '80s produced the same slasher film over and over but history is repeating itself. Right, I'm off to pitch some movies – working titles: *Ominous*, *Pernicious*, *Foreboding* and *Odious*.

CLOWN JEWELS

➔ It's a wonder James Wan has the time to produce generic haunted house movies. After making the fifth highest grossing film of all time with *Fast & Furious 7* he's now attached to

Original but repellent, or inoffensive but generic? It's not been a good month in horror



Aaaaaaaah! may well have you screaming that.



Some *Demonic* painters and decorators?



Trees all look the same in *The Witch*.

direct *Aquaman* for DC and Warner. Horror directors taking on blockbusters is nothing new – James Cameron, Ridley Scott and Peter Jackson are the obvious ones, more recent examples are James Gunn and Gareth Edwards, and yet my mind was still blown when I heard that Jon Watts, creator of recent low budget, grotty (but funny) scary clown movie **Clown** is now attached to the Spider-Man standalone reboot. Right now I wouldn't be surprised to wake up on Monday to discover I was attached to the next tentpole – it's like jury duty for anyone who's ever been close to a horror movie set. Perhaps after I've got financing for the "me puking down myself" cult classic or the terrifying supernatural shocker *Ominous* (from the makers of *Pernicious* – "It's like *Odious* meets *Foreboding*!" Penny Dreadful, SFX), they'll let me do *Star Wars X*.

GET WICKED

➔ It's not all doom and gloom. **The Witch** trailer released recently looks terrifying. This is the film that premiered at this year's Sundance to rave reviews, and the trailer is gorgeously unnerving, as a Jacobean family are banished from their settlement and venture into the woods, when suddenly their baby is taken. Rituals, curses and a sinister-looking goat are involved. It's already booked for the Toronto Film Festival and I've heard it might show at the London Film Festival in October. Director Rob Eggers better clear his schedule, those tentpoles won't direct themselves... ●

Dreadful thing to do

➔ Pick up the new SFX and *Total Film* special, *Horror – The Ultimate Celebration*, on sale now. It's 148 glossy pages of horror loveliness including a big preview, interviews with George Romero, Bruce Campbell, Eli Roth and Tom Six, retro features on *Scream*, *Peeping Tom* and *The Omen* and much more. I've "ordered" my copy on pre-blag!





FREESPEAK

WHERE WRITERS AND OPINIONS COLLIDE

Comics legend **Pat Mills** asks if SF needs to be escapist entertainment

The Nazis take over London in *It Happened Here*.



My all-time favourite film is *It Happened Here* (1965), about an alternative history Nazi occupation of Britain. Written and directed by Kevin Brownlow and Andrew Mollo, it's exciting, entertaining, visually spectacular, with great characters but... very dark. As a result, it bombed at the box office. And I believe it would bomb today because we just don't want to believe British civilians would collaborate or be manipulated by Nazi propaganda. I've checked and had negative, even bored reactions from friends to the chilling moral dilemmas explored in the film. But if the heroine had been young and sexy; and there was a vengeful hero wiping out the Nazis with a sub-machine gun, I'm sure, then and now, it would be a massive hit.

So the audience message seems to be that SF should be escapist, light entertainment. Thus I enjoyed the latest *Avengers* film as "entertainment", as long as I ignored its questionable moral compass – namely it was self-created mayhem.

Unquestioning action seems to be the general direction of SF movies

and perhaps they're part of the ongoing dumbing down of society. One can hardly blame the filmmakers if this is all the audience has been conditioned to require. The supposed real world out there, as carefully selected for inclusion in the news every night, is so close to the sinister truths of *It Happened Here* that we need some relief from it in fantasy.

And perhaps that's the intention of our Orwellian media-masters. To assume otherwise is to ignore the central role of media manipulation from Edward Bernays onwards. The proud father of propaganda said, "The conscious manipulation of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute the true ruling power of our country." We need to manipulate back. But staying on the commercial side – with sexy main characters firing sub-machine guns. ☛

Pat Mills' Requiem Vampire Knight graphic novel series is out now on Comixology. Dan Dare: The 2000 AD Year Vol 1 by Pat with Steve Moore and Gerry Finley-Day, is published on 5 November.

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or the **Demon Road.**
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and there are **no maps**
to guide the way...”

SHE'S HAVING
A **HELL** OF A TIME



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THE WALKING DEAD

WOLVES

SEASON SIX OF
THE WALKING DEAD

PROMISES TO “BLOW
YOUR MIND”
JOSEPH McCABE
DISCOVERS

**AT
THE**

DOOR

After five seasons as executive producer of *The Walking Dead*, preceded by 30 years producing some of the most memorable genre films in history, Gale Anne Hurd isn't someone given to hyperbole. So when Hurd and her fellow EP Scott Gimple take time out of their hectic schedule to chat with *SFX* about the TV phenomenon's sixth season midway through its production, we have every reason to believe her when she tells us, "I think you'll find this season will blow your mind."

"Huge' and 'pedal to the metal' is probably how I would describe season six," says the veteran producer. "Both in terms of story and scale. We've got 18 regular cast members now. That's huge. And in terms of 'pedal to the metal', if you've seen our promo you know that our band of survivors, as big as they are now, are facing a huge threat from the walkers. We've lived in a world that was somewhat out in the sticks. There were a few walkers. But now we're really going to see a world that's been overtaken by them."

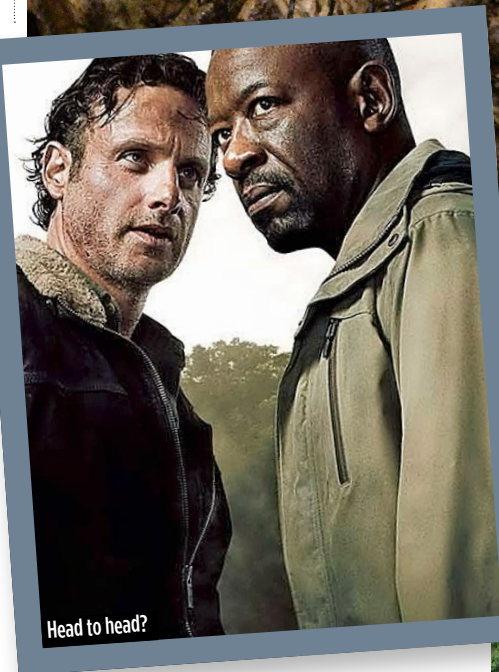
It's a world that leader Rick Grimes (Andrew Lincoln) finds himself increasingly at odds with after the season five finale. In perhaps the show's most shocking season finale yet, Rick – after being given shelter by a community of survivors in Alexandria, Virginia – killed a man in cold blood as he was reunited with his long lost friend Morgan Jones (Lennie James), the first survivor he encountered after waking from his coma. It's an act, Hurd says, that will have severe repercussions in *The Walking Dead*'s sixth year, possibly dividing the show's survivors between the men. Though she's quick to state that what's to come will be more complicated than the simple conflict that arises "whenever you have two strong characters".

"Let's not forget that you have the complication of Jessie's relationship with Rick," says Hurd, addressing the abused Alexandria survivor (Alexandra Breckenridge) whose husband Rick killed. "You have the complication of how her kids view that. You still have dissension within the ranks of people who really don't want to challenge how things are done in Alexandria with those who do. You've got the added complication of Father Gabriel. So there's still a lot more going on than just these two titans back together again."

MOVING ON UP

As for the Alexandria group's leader, Deanna Monroe (actress Tovah Feldshuh) who urged Rick to kill Jessie's husband after he took the

Some diets
are too much.



Head to head?

life of her own, Hurd tells us to expect a different person when we see the former US Congresswoman again in season six.

"I think we left season five with a very much changed Deanna. In a moment her world was shaken. She believed in her core that her way, her approach – non-violent, 'Everything's going to work out', 'There doesn't need to be any intervention with Pete' – all of those chickens came home to roost. And now that she's lost Reg and basically told Rick, 'Kill Pete', she's certainly very much different from the Deanna that we first encountered. I think she sees now and has an acceptance of what Rick has lived,

SURVIVOR TALK



→ "She really was keen to see this cohesion [between Rick's group

and Alexandria] happen. There has to be society in this world. There can't just be Terminus and the Governor. They can't be all this world has come to... The unfortunate thing that happens with Reg, with her sword, it causes her to end up in a place at the end of the season where I have to re-own that power because I don't trust anyone else's hands. She's still in Alexandria. Of course, she still wants them there, but she's taken the sword back."

DANAI GURIRA
MICHONNE



Well, that's inconvenient.



The face that launched a thousand fanfics.

SURVIVOR TALK



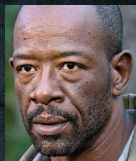
→ "The amount of fan art I get of me and Rick making out, it's

magnificent! We should do a show - an art show, a proper art show of the two of us in a bathtub together. It's insane. Are they looking for me to have a committed relationship with these people? Just to bone them? The truth is, I don't know that Daryl is ready to do any of that. It's almost the same as, 'You ever going to cut your hair on the show?' Why the hell would I cut my hair in a zombie apocalypse? 'You ever gonna take a bath?' [I'm] just going to get dirty again."

NORMAN REEDUS
DARYL DIXON

“Now we’re really going to see a world overtaken by walkers”

SURVIVOR TALK



→ "On one level, the image of the season six poster [with Rick and

Morgan head to head] could be literal or it could be symbolic of a theme that's going to run through season six about that dynamic, the dynamic that Morgan presents and the dynamic Rick presents, that will permeate everybody, that may show up more practically in conflicts between other people... It's a bit like Daryl - sexually ambiguous [laughs]."

LENNIE JAMES
MORGAN JONES

and his code. I don't know that she feels necessarily that all of her ambitions and goals for Alexandria are muted because of that, but I think she's incredibly shaken."

Walking Dead showrunner Gimple adds, "I think the big thing with the finale was that the jeopardy wasn't, 'Oh god, are they gonna kick Rick out?' It was, 'Oh god, are they gonna try to kick Rick out?' which would subsequently make Rick potentially kill someone or potentially kill a few people, or threaten people, or take over that place by force. That was the jeopardy, and he found a way to do it without any of that violence. In fact, it wasn't until after that reconciliation, after he had sort of squared things and it seemed like everything was gonna be cool, that violence reared its head."

With an ever-expanding cast, and still more players about to be introduced, you can only marvel at how *The Walking Dead* weaves so

many characters so effortlessly. Hurd tells us the secret lies in the show's source material, as created by writer-producer Robert Kirkman.

"I think the underlying comic book is such a fantastic blueprint for how to do that incredibly well, and luckily we have the comic books to draw on. What keeps the show interesting is that each season we complicate the interpersonal relationships by introducing new characters. The comic book fans are going to see iterations of them that certainly bear a resemblance to the ones in the comic book without being entirely consistent with the plots that are from the comic books. We love the Easter eggs. We love introducing characters like Heath, but we also want to make sure that we keep it fresh and interesting."

DÉJÀ VU

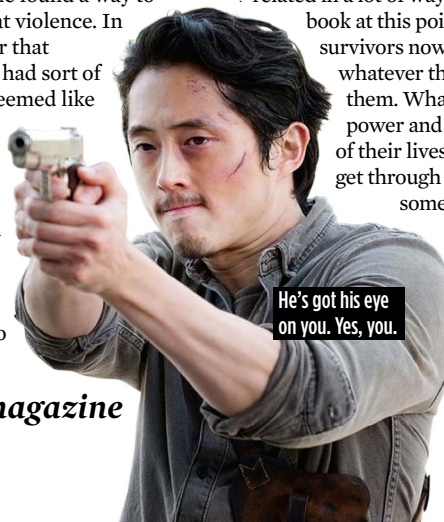
In addition to actor Corey Hawkins' no-nonsense Heath, season six will introduce another comics character in Dr Denise Cloyd (played by Merritt Wever), an Alexandrian medic, and another resident named Carter (played by Ethan Embry), who's merely mentioned in the book as one of those who helped build the town's wall.

"The characters that are introduced," explains Hurd, "will be very identifiable from panels in the comic book. So those fans who want those Easter eggs will absolutely have them. But once again we're not hewing to a particular storyline arc for those characters taken directly from the comic book. There will absolutely be nods and panels brought to life, but not exactly in the way [one would expect]. As Robert has said from the very beginning, the show is inspired by the comic books but he has an opportunity to explore things with those characters that he was unable to in the comic books. And because we have characters like Daryl Dixon that didn't exist in the comic books, by virtue of the fact that he is in that universe... it's going to change things."

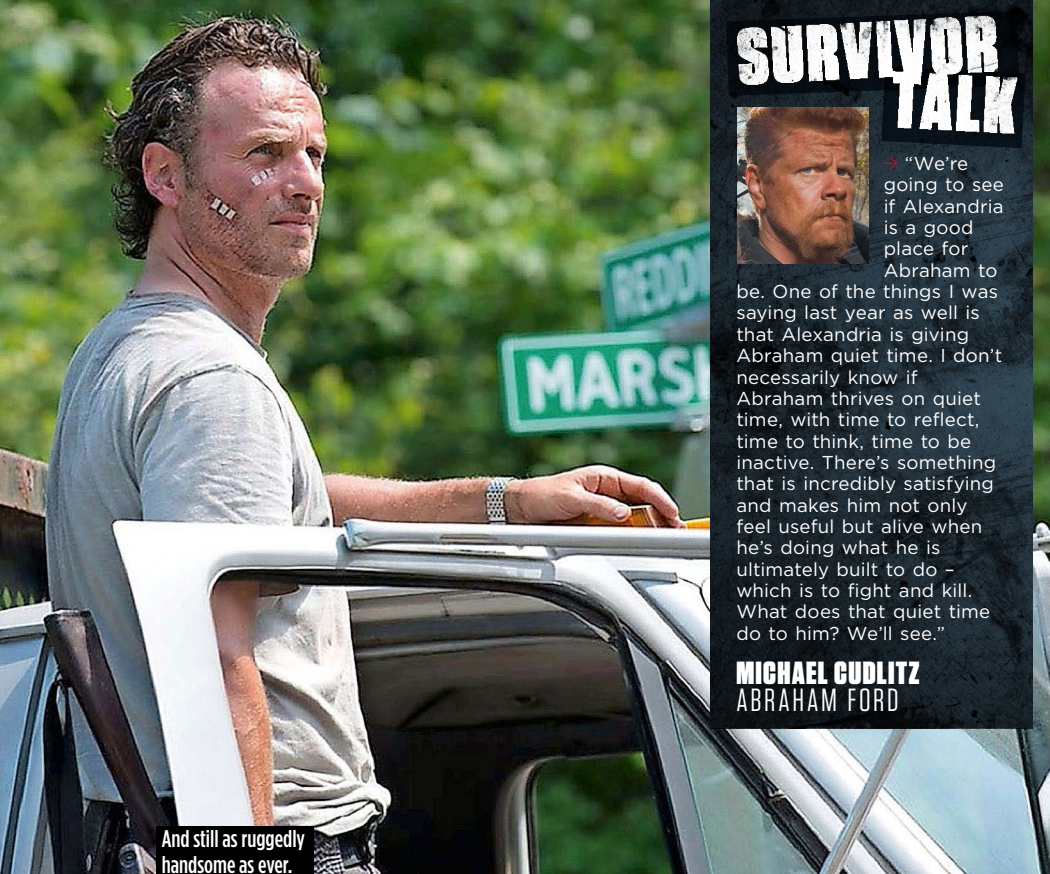
While the details of the two narratives will continue to differ, Gimple observes that Kirkman's comic indeed reflects the mental state of the show's survivors in the months ahead.

"Where we are in the show at this point is related in a lot of ways to where they were in the

book at this point. They're consummate survivors now, this group, they can take whatever the world has thrown at them. What do they do with that power and how do they face the rest of their lives now knowing they can get through it? They're gonna face some pretty intense challenges, but those challenges are gonna form them even more deeply into the characters that they will become." →



He's got his eye on you. Yes, you.



And still as ruggedly handsome as ever.

SURVIVOR TALK



→ "We're going to see if Alexandria is a good place for Abraham to be. One of the things I was saying last year as well is that Alexandria is giving Abraham quiet time. I don't necessarily know if Abraham thrives on quiet time, with time to reflect, time to think, time to be inactive. There's something that is incredibly satisfying and makes him not only feel useful but alive when he's doing what he is ultimately built to do - which is to fight and kill. What does that quiet time do to him? We'll see."

MICHAEL GUDNITZ
ABRAHAM FORD

That's some well-conditioned hair, considering.



"I think Greg has said 800 or more," says Hurd, a note of awe in her voice at Nicotero and his squad of artists' accomplishment. The season premiere alone, she tells us, "will have the most walkers of any episode to date."

"Every season I think, 'There's no way that Greg and his team can top what they've done last season.' But they do. It's been great to see that over these six years the collaboration between the writers and the effects team is so great that often great ideas come from prosthetic effects that we're able to incorporate into the show."

As ever with *The Walking Dead*, the greatest threat to our band of survivors this season will come not from the dead but the living. This time around that threat is made manifest by the Wolves, a pack of scavengers who've forsaken all semblance of their humanity, ominously foreshadowing what Rick could become should he continue down a path without mercy.

Before she and Gimple return to their work, we ask Hurd if these bloodthirsty marauders could soon infiltrate Alexandria. The exec hesitates for a moment before responding.

"Each season we've had new threats from within and without. Going back to the graffiti we've seen previously... 'Wolves not far.' That's probably all I can say." ●

The Walking Dead is on FOX in the UK from 12 October. The show airs on AMC in the US.

“As with any good drama, the characters evolve, the world evolves”

Despite the intense affection fans have for the show's core survivors, Hurd insists that *The Walking Dead*'s writers are unafraid of the inevitable fallout that would occur if they did the unthinkable and killed off its most cherished characters.

SAFETY NOT GUARANTEED

"The thing is that there are arcs for each character, and we have to be true to that first and foremost. If we're not, then we run the risk of not telling the story well. So no one's immune... I think we proved after this period of time that we don't do it just to goose the ratings or just for the shock value. There really is an arc that's been planned out, often a couple of seasons in advance, for the characters, and the journeys of the remaining characters are all influenced by who survives and who doesn't. It really is something where you have to stay true to those arcs. Because they affect so many of the other characters.

"As with any good drama, the characters evolve, the world evolves. Unlike a soap opera that's set in a hospital and is always going to be in a hospital and always dealing with relationships between doctors and nurses and patients, our settings continue to evolve. The threat continues to evolve. And because

characters evolve the relationships among them change. That's why the level of commitment of the cast and the crew remains so strong. No one is phoning it in. That's what keeps it fresh and interesting, just working with the most incredibly talented people that I've had the pleasure of collaborating with over a 30-plus year career; and being able to tell 16-plus hours of drama in my favourite genre, horror, year after year. That's just a blessing."

Adding to the show's horror this season will be a far greater number of walkers than fans have ever seen before, courtesy of Hurd's fellow executive producer, make-up effects master Greg Nicotero.

REMEMBERING TYREESE

→ Few characters on *The Walking Dead* were as beloved by fans, or Greg Nicotero, as Chad Coleman's Tyreese. "I've had to kill off a lot of characters on the show," says the director/executive producer. "When Chad and I went to dinner, he said, 'Tyreese has done what he needs to do.' Chad was at peace with what his journey was. I got chills watching him in that last scene, where he's in a room talking to the ghost of everybody. There's blood flying off his arm and he's battering the walls. It was so powerful. Chad put every ounce of who he was as an actor out there."

The Walking Dead is never afraid to kill its favourites.





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THE MARTIAN

RED OR

Ridley Scott's going back into space, with Matt Damon on board. Jamie Graham checks their progress

DEAD

NASA loves the book, and quite like me because I've done some science fiction," says Ridley Scott, somewhat modestly, as Matt Damon nips off to the loo. Given Damon is today in full-spacesuit regalia, Scott has plenty of time to chat – costume designer Janty Yates might have aided the actors tremendously by creating an 80lb version of NASA's 240lb Z-1 suits, but peeling them off is, to employ technical terminology, a bit of a bugger.

"They're all science fiction buffs!" Scott continues, keen to stress that his 23rd feature, *The Martian*, based on Andy Weir's hard-science novel, is 100 per cent scientifically accurate. Well, apart from the sleek suits with their perfectly-lit-from-within helmets ("They look better," he shrugs.) "If you respect NASA [and, presumably, if you've made *Alien*, *Blade Runner* and *Prometheus*], they're very helpful. The book was about something feasible. Mark Watney is the biologist on the team who figures out that Mars' earth has every component in it to grow crops. It's missing one thing, manure. So that's what he does first. It's disgusting."

Scott's on a roll and grinning in a manner that belies his reputation as a gruff grouch. You could say he likes to talk crap... →

“The studio’s biggest stage is bigger than the Bond stage”

“You want the details?” he teases, then launches merrily into a description of the astronauts’ toilet system in their Habitat on Mars. “It’s a bit like a 747 loo,” he says. “You think you’re going to get sucked in and then it’s completely air-dry, and ‘it’ all ends up in little packets. On it is a date and a name, so you all know whose is whose, because later they’ll analyse that; it goes back to Earth to see what no gravity is doing to your bone structure and body. Anyway, he has to collect all the manure since they’ve been there, for five people, and eke out nitrogen to supplement the Martian soil to enable him to compound it into some spuds.” Poo-tatoes, anyone?

LOST IN SPACE

Adapted for the screen by Drew Goddard (*The Cabin In The Woods*), who originally intended to also direct it, *The Martian* sees botanist/mechanical engineer Watney (Damon) separated from his crew in a ferocious dust storm. Left for dead, he is a modern-day Robinson Crusoe with Mars as his desert island and his vessel, a craft called Hermes, now out of sight in the ocean of space. And so he sets about figuring a way to send an SOS back to Houston while finding the means to survive for the four years it will take until a rescue mission can screech to a halt by his jutting thumb.

So what was the main appeal to Scott, who agreed to captain the ship as soon as he read Goddard’s “fantastic” script, and who was delighted that the project came with Damon already attached? Was it the idea of an isolated man stewing in existential dread? “No, that’s too pretentious,” he barks. “There are four



It's not long before Matt Damon's sporting some whiskers.

universes: there's NASA; there's JPL [Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California]; there's on board the ship; and there's the man stranded on Mars. I'm intercutting between four universes.” So while the primary sell of *The Martian* might be “Castaway in space”, a pitch that was bandied around Hollywood when Fox snapped up the rights in March 2013, it is, in truth, a movie that boasts an out-of-this-world ensemble: Jessica Chastain, Kate Mara, Sebastian Stan, Michael Pena and Aksel Hennie as the astronauts aboard the Hermes; and Jeff Daniels, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Sean Bean and Kristen Wiig as NASA bods pacing back and forth on Earth. It is, then, even by Scott's standards, a vast, complicated movie...

“Not really,” he says, clearly unfazed by the supersized sets and stunning hardware that litter the soundstages of Korda Studio,

SPACE RACER

Jessica Chastain is Melissa Lewis



Did you meet with astronauts to prepare?

→ My first meeting with Ridley, I said, “If I did this film, can I go to space camp?” So I got to go to JPL to see all the robotics and the Curiosity rover. I got to see them

programming the rover on Mars and I got to do virtual reality where you put the glasses on and see actual images from Mars all around me. I could see the rover and walk around it.

Is that level of research vital to forming your characters?

→ Whenever I'm playing a role, I do as much research as I can, and then once I get there, I try not to think about the research. A lot of my scenes I wear my wedding ring; I don't know why, but I had this idea that people wouldn't wear jewellery in space. But I was told they wear jewellery all the time.

Matt says Ridley is a pussycat. Did you find that to be true?

→ I didn't find him tough at all. I'd go over to his tent and watch playback with him. We'd all hang out with him. We all felt part of a team. We were all going out for dinner and hanging out a lot. He's an absolute legend!



The astronauts testing out the best positions for arms.

Who let that Rubik's Cube on set?!



"If only I had Monty Don with me!"



And you thought some Sunday afternoons were testing...

Budapest. "It's quite normal. We found a very good home here. This studio's fantastic. Four stages, very big. The biggest one is, I think, bigger than the Bond stage [at Pinewood]. I need that."

He most certainly does. Today Scott is shooting the sandstorm that separates Watney from his crew. No CGI for this filmmaker; he might be an early adopter who embraces ever-evolving tech, but he's decidedly old-school when it comes to building sets and shooting practical stunts, explaining it brings "authenticity", while keeping costs down: "When everything's green screen, it ends up being far more expensive," he says. "It means you haven't really planned it. And if you haven't planned it, you have to add components that you hadn't allowed for."

Damon, Chastain and co are leaning into a dust storm generated by gigantic turbines.

Here, on Korda Studios' showcase stage, the biggest in Europe, the floor is covered in 4,000 tonnes of grit, each grain carefully selected to match the surface of Wadi Rum in southern Jordan, which will be Scott's next stop to shoot Mars exteriors. The noise is deafening, the action unbearable to watch... and even more unbearable to be a part of, it seems, for grit and rubble finds its way into the actors' spacesuits to cause considerable discomfort.

The setpiece generates awe whether viewed live or on the four monitors in Scott's operations tent (he likes to shoot with multiple cameras). But should you think the remainder of *The Martian* will be Damon stabbing at red soil with a trowel and then watching intently as spuds grow before our drooping eyes, the director promises "five or six big spectacles", and promptly launches into a description of one of the climactic action sequences. He talks generalities more than specifics, and in such language that his intentions only partly poke out from a fog of mystery, but those wanting to avoid spoilers should perhaps hop over the next paragraph.

"Hermes is here, and Mars is over there," he begins, holding his hands apart. "They're only 200 miles off the surface of Mars. So they're docking. It's a difficult thing to do. To pick up Watney, they've elected this insane method – he's travelling the same speed as they are around Mars, so they're going to do a slingshot round Mars and fundamentally pick him up on the line. It's all doable. NASA approved it.

I WILL SURVIVE

Matt Damon is Mark Watney



You'd never met Ridley before meeting about *The Martian*. How is he to work for?

→ It's been a really, really smooth shoot. That's why all of his departments keep coming back. He gives everyone ample

room to do their work, and he's really open to suggestions from the circle that he trusts, but he's very decisive at the end of the day.

You have a lot of monologues in it...

→ I learned all the monologues like a play, so I turned up ready to go. The first take, Ridley stormed into the set and said, "Cut," and then said, "We should have shot two movies at once!"

Has the shoot been physically taxing?

→ It would have been really draining with another director, but this is how I feel working with Soderbergh or with Clint – it's over before it gets uncomfortable. The spacesuit I wore was like a wetsuit, and we had to shoot in Jordan, in the desert, and I had a beard and a helmet on... It was *hot*. With a less precise director I would have been sweating until I passed out, but with Ridley, you can handle discomfort because you can always see the light at the end of the tunnel.



They said, 'Yeah, we can do that.' So that's what I'm doing."

HOME FROM HOME

Walking around Korda Studios, the sights keep coming: a fully functioning Rover that Watney uses to get around (it reaches speeds of 30mph on desert terrain); the Habitat that the Mars crew shelter in, replete with bunk beds, science paraphernalia and, yes, toilets; row upon row of potatoes ripening under Gro Lights; the bottom half of a landing vessel (the top portion will be CGI); and a sizeable segment of the massive Hermes ship, including a gymnasium. This last is built on gimbals to allow for rotation and will provide the illusion of a turning wheel.

"Stanley [Kubrick, 2001] came up with the idea of the wheel, which of course is gravity," Scott explains. "That's mathematics. Science. Fundamentally, the wheel has to spin at a minimum of five miles an hour. The spin-wheel is a tube that runs the entire length of the ship." Veracity is of vital importance to him. "One →



Wouldn't look so bad with a couple of sun loungers and umbrellas.

of the most expensive things that NASA is still trying to work out is, on long distances, what's happening to your calcium? So they have a gravitational section, meaning there is gravity in part of the ship, and the rest of it is non-gravity."

Talking of *Gravity*, it was the financial and critical success of Alfonso Cuarón's breath-stealing blockbuster that led to space adventures being firmly back in favour in Hollywood. But Scott is adamant that *The Martian* is very much its own beast, pointing out that it offers an entirely different journey to, say, *Interstellar* or *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. Part of it is the aforementioned authenticity, with NASA even signing off on their logo appearing on the hardware, so truthful is the science. But it's also Watney's indefatigable human spirit, bubbling to the surface in the form of humour.

"The book has a lot of humour, in a real way," says Scott. "There are no cheap laughs. I always think it's funny that Watney's done months on Mars and now, as he prepares to leave, he stops for a moment before he presses the button [to exit the Habitat], and looks back and he's left his helmet on the desk. He could have walked outside and he'd be dead." The director chuckles. "It's like parking your car in a foreign country. You get in the car and start up and people are flashing you and you think, 'What are they flashing at me for?' And you're on the wrong side of the road!" ●

The Martian opens on 30 September.

"WRITING THE BOOK WAS A LABOUR OF LOVE"

Meet the man behind *The Martian*, novelist Andy Weir



How long did *The Martian* take you to write?

→ About three years. That includes the research. I didn't sit down to do all the research and then write it. It was interspersed. Also it was a labour of love so I was doing it in my spare time and months without touching it.

It went from website to Kindle to a paperback bestseller to blockbuster film. Did you ever imagine such a journey?

→ You fantasise about that stuff, in the same way you fantasise as a kid playing Little League Baseball about being in the World Series. Translating that to British, when you're a kid playing football, you fantasise about playing in the World Cup!

Were you included in the filmmaking process much?

→ They don't have to include me; my only job is to cash the cheque! But they chose to involve me, which was great. Drew [Goddard] talked to me a lot. He was then offered the *Sinister Six* movie, which is a dream come true for him. That was about the time that Matt Damon signed on. The studio were like, "We have a very serious actor, so let's see which other directors are interested." And Ridley Scott expressed interest!

For a science fiction buff like you, that must have been a dream!

→ Of course. I love *Alien* and *Blade Runner*. I have not actually seen *Prometheus*, so I have no opinion on

it. I'm also a big fan of science fiction TV shows.

Any particular favourites?

→ Oh yes, absolutely. I think you might have heard of it: *Doctor Who*! The correct answer by the way is the Fifth Doctor, Peter Davison. He's the best!

Does Matt Damon satisfy your vision of Mark Watney?

→ When I saw the viral trailers, I got really excited. That was the first time I saw Matt Damon being Mark Watney and he's nailed it. It's exactly how I imagined Watney's speech pattern, body language, affectations.

Were you on set at all?

→ I was invited but I have a significant fear of flying, which I know is ironic! I live in California and they were filming in Budapest, so that was too much for me to consider. I would not have been able to handle it.

Have you watched other recent space movies, like *Gravity* and *Interstellar*?

→ I really liked *Gravity*. There were some scientific inaccuracies but that's fine, it's a movie. *Interstellar* I didn't think was that great, because it was all pretty cool science up until the end, when it starts to get really esoteric, and I'm not as into that stuff.

Does it bug you when films get the science wrong?

→ You can violate physical law all you want in a movie as long as you're internally consistent about it. That's all I want. So, if you say "We have a warp drive and it lets us go 100 times faster than light", I'm like, "Fine". But if you can do that, it should not take you 10 hours to get from Earth to Mars. It should take you seconds!

Jamie Graham



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“Sometimes you’ve got to wrestle the rubber octopus!”

Peter Capaldi tells Nick Setchfield all about his dream job

Peter Capaldi radiates the kind of job satisfaction that only comes with total mastery over time and space. “I’m always excited about a new series because I get to be Doctor Who,” he tells *SFX*, in his smoky Glasgow brogue. “I still get excited when I walk onto the TARDIS or I see a monster. I get excited every time a script arrives.”

Capaldi, it’s clear, was born to play Doctor Who. He may even have been bred in a secret BBC genetics lab at licence payers’ expense. All gaunt, wintry otherworldliness, there’s enough of his art school, pop-punk past to belie his 57 years and add a hint of something jagged and anarchic around the edges. Today he’s dressed in a dark, formal jacket and a

baggy, knitted jumper. It’s a familiar look but these are his own clothes, not the Time Lord’s. Reality blurs. And no wonder. We’re chatting in a corner of a bleak military base so utterly reeking of ’70s *Doctor Who* you imagine Jon Pertwee might stride down the corridor at any moment.

The base has been commandeered by BBC Wales for episodes seven and eight of this latest run of adventures. We’ve already spotted a marauding Zygon terrorising guest star Ingrid Oliver (“Did you like my *Jurassic Park* acting?” she asks *SFX*). Capaldi’s not filming today but some of the Doctor clings to him, even in his civvies. At one point he tilts his head, deep in thought as he shapes an answer, and all you can see is title sequence.

“I was always very taken by that Tom Baker quote →

when he said that he'd realised he'd been playing Doctor Who for years before he got the role. I'm probably in a similar position in that I'd been brought up with *Doctor Who*. It probably influenced the kind of actor that I became, long before I'd considered the notion that I might ever be Doctor Who."

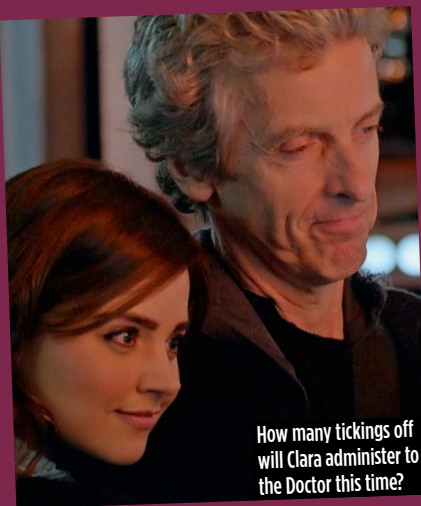
PAST GLORIES

Capaldi's love of the show is legend. Like his predecessor David Tennant he's a lifelong fan who found himself handed the key to the TARDIS. You imagine it must have been like a billion Christmases colliding. How does it feel to become part of the thing you love? Can he still sit down and watch "The Talons Of Weng-Chiang"?

"Yeah! I do. I watched that one the other week! I enjoyed it very much. It's on two levels. There's the fan level and there's the professional actor level. As a professional actor I have the greatest of respect – and growing respect – for anybody who ever did anything in *Doctor Who*, because the actual day to day reality of it... You know, the Zygons are magnificent, but sometimes a monster is not quite what it should be, or a set is not quite as cosmic as you had hoped. And of course with us, the level of sophistication that we have in our rendering of these things is huge compared to some periods in the show's history. But that's an actor's job. You come in and you give it everything you've got.

"I'm often reminded of a wonderful film called *Ed Wood*, with Johnny Depp," Capaldi continues. "Martin Landau plays Bela Lugosi. And there's a great scene in that where Ed Wood shoots a scene of a rubber octopus attacking Bela Lugosi. They're doing it in the middle of the night because they've borrowed the cameras and they've got to get them back to the studio by the next day. And Bela turns up and he's had a few drinks. And there is the rubber octopus, and it doesn't do anything. It's not connected to a motor, there's nobody operating it, it just lies there in a puddle. He says to Ed Wood: 'What am I supposed to do with this?' And Ed Wood says: 'Bela, I've got 25 scenes to shoot tonight, please!' And so Bela

Who are those eyebrows going to attack this season?



How many tickings off will Clara administer to the Doctor this time?

just takes a swig of his whisky and gets down into the puddle and wrestles the octopus with everything he's got. Sometimes *Doctor Who* is like that. Sometimes you've got to wrestle the rubber octopus! It's always been that way. And that's a great tradition to be part of."

So what was it about *Doctor Who* that first got inside his head? Was there a moment, a concept, a visual that snagged him for life? Capaldi considers the question with another long, ruminative pause.

"It wasn't like that," he concludes. "I'm happy to watch any monster movie, or anything with spaceships, or fairytales. But there's a sort of haunting quality to *Doctor Who* which I can't really put my finger on. There's a sort of melancholia about it, which I don't understand. There's a light and a dark. I don't even like to talk about it very much. If you go and look at the old shows they deteriorate, because their life in my imagination is greater than the reality. But that's what they were meant to be. I was six when I saw the Dalek coming out of the water in 'The Dalek Invasion Of Earth', so that has been absorbed powerfully into my psyche, but it's not just that specific moment."

SET THE CO-ORDINATES!

Which classic planets would PETER CAPALDI revisit?

→ "Vortis! From 'The Web Planet' [1965 William Hartnell adventure]. It was rather badly served both by time and the script, but I think the idea of it, of this planet of insects – can you imagine what you could afford to do now? They couldn't afford to do it, but I love the spirit that they tried. So I'd love to expand on that, to deliver a Vortis that lived up to the idea. And Mondas, so I could meet the Mondasian Cybermen!"



Capaldi's groping for words now, trying to articulate his deep love of *Doctor Who* but afraid of pinning it down, dissecting it. "There's something about the TARDIS... It's a special place. It's a personal place. It's a spaceship that's not full of people in uniforms walking around. It's a private, quite haunting place. And also the regenerations are a kind of evocation of death and rebirth. And its constant rebirth is



If there's trouble,
he'll find it...

“There’s a haunting quality to *Doctor Who* which I can’t put my finger on”

fascinating. The fact that it would constantly mutate. Jon Pertwee would appear, then Tom Baker, then Peter... It's just amazing. And that it still survives. Essentially there's something there that it's good not to examine too closely."

He narrows his eyes. "You know it when it's there, when *Doctor Who*'s there. And when it's not. And when we do the show you struggle sometimes to get him there, to get it there, whether it be a costume or a look or a line. You go, 'No, that's not it...' And then suddenly you hit it and you don't know why. There's a scale to it. It's beyond that wall. It's being able to see beyond the roof, to be able to see beyond the sky, to be able to see beyond this moment yet still inhabit this moment." Capaldi smiles, catches himself. "That's all a lot of blather, but you know what I mean..."

CHOOSING A DOCTOR

We feel as though we've just placed this fine, thoughtful fellow on the couch. Time to take a lighter tack. If he could share a story with one of his predecessors, living or dead, which one would it be?

Fifteen seconds pass in silence. Capaldi's eyes flicker, dialling through possibilities, as if

Doctor Who adventures we will never see are playing inside his head.

"William Hartnell! I think he'd be really annoyed by William Hartnell. He'd love him, just the same, but I think he'd be really impatient with him. Because he's grumpy, and he's probably a bit grumpy as well. He'd want him to loosen up a bit. And also because William Hartnell's the father. He's the original *Doctor Who*! Before I was *Doctor Who* Mark Gatiss very kindly invited me down to watch them shooting *An Adventure In Space And Time*. I met David Bradley, who was brilliant, and I got my photograph taken with him. I sent Mark an email afterwards saying 'Thanks very much for letting a little boy finally get to meet *Doctor Who*!' And that's what it felt like, because that's what I remember *Doctor Who* being like, that is who *Doctor Who* is."

Capaldi takes out his phone, thumbs through his photos, finds the one of the future Twelfth Doctor standing next to David Bradley as the First. Then he shares a shot of himself in the 1960s TARDIS console room, a happy fanboy among the gleaming white roundels.

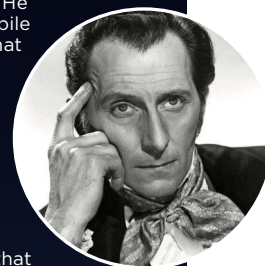
"That was a great day," he reflects, fondly. "And of course this was before anyone had said anything to me about playing the part. Mark

THE PETER PRINCIPLE

PETER CAPALDI salutes his Hammer hero

→ "I love Peter Cushing. No matter how bad the film that he was in, he always delivered all of his lines with great grace and truthfulness. He obviously had a whole pile of things that he did, that he had learned, that perhaps someone had taught him to do to help him get through long speeches. And one that he always does is light a cigarette. Whenever he does a spiel like 'The werewolf is a creature that appears at the full moon', he'll open his cigarette case and take out a cigarette and tap it. I happened to be talking about the Mummy in 'Mummy On The Orient Express', and I thought well, I can't use a cigarette - *Doctor Who* doesn't smoke - but I'll get a cigarette case and put jelly babies in it!

"He's a wonderful actor, much underestimated, much underrated, but loved. I think he had many interesting methods. I always remember at the end of *Dracula* he captures Dracula at dawn. It's in Dracula's castle, and the script just called for him to pull the curtains open to let the sunlight in. But he said, 'No, I want to jump on the table, run along the table, leap up and go down with the curtains!' They said, 'Oh, okay, if you want to try that...' And he did it and it's fabulous. So that's what I tried to do the other day. They said, 'You go over there and leap on the Zygon...' I said, 'I'd rather jump on a table and then leap on the Zygon!'"



said to me, "How would you feel about being *Doctor Who*?" I said, "Well, I think that ship's sailed, hasn't it?" He said, "Oh, I don't know..."

Our time is up. But Capaldi wants to know something as we leave the room together. It's a question for a fellow fan. Was there a moment that made us love *Doctor Who* too?

Well, there was that supremely creepy bit in the first Peter Cushing Dalek film - the moment the eyestalks on the walls of the silent, empty city on Skaro suddenly moved, tracking the unsuspecting time travellers...

Capaldi says goodbye, walking to a waiting car in the Welsh drizzle. He has one thing left to share. "The poster for that film was on my street when I was a boy. I always wanted it. I wonder who's got it now?" ●

Doctor Who airs on Saturdays on BBC One.

REX (1)

MICHELLE GOMEZ

Making *Doctor Who*'s Missy the master of all she commands

Words by Nick Setchfield /// Photography by David Venni

Michelle Gomez takes a moment from the pursuit of pure evil to share a confession. "I'm a slow learner, I'm a late starter, and I'm always late to the party," she tells *SFX*, chatting in between takes at BBC Wales' Roath Lock studios. *Doctor Who*'s epic two-part series opener sees Gomez return as Missy, the new, gender-swapped incarnation of Gallifreyan nemesis the Master. A poisonous Mary Poppins with a taste for high tea and casual murder, it's a showpiece role for the mercurial, mischievous Scot. "So far in my career I've bucked the trend somehow. I haven't got sucked into the 26-episode serial, *Casualty* or *Holby City*. Thankfully having this face has stopped me doing that. This is not an easy face to cast! And not one you want to see every week on your telly!" She flashes her wide, crystalline eyes. "I'm theatrical saffron, in that way. A little light sprinkling here and there..."

Was this an easy role for you to say yes to?

☛ I didn't have to think about it. As a woman of a certain age I fall between two categories at the moment – I'm not young and I'm not *that* old. There's an odd moment in an actress' life when you tend to disappear until all the older parts come along. For me, Missy's a real gift, because I'm not playing somebody's mum and I'm not in the back of shot playing third monkey to such-and-such who's having a far more successful career than me [laughs]. So I actually get to have a lot of fun. A lot of actresses just disappear by the time they're my grand old age of [leans into dictaphone and declares, emphatically] 27...

Changing the Master's gender was a big deal for *Doctor Who* fans. Was it for you?

☛ It felt like a big deal, but I didn't want to be daunted by that. I didn't want to think about it too deeply. I think Steven just effortlessly made that transition from Master to Mistress. Today it doesn't seem to be a question anymore. It used to matter for my generation. I've not had anybody question it. I guess that surprised me a little but if we want to get into sexual politics things have thankfully really balanced out.

Did you go back and look at your predecessors?

☛ You know, I didn't. I have to be very honest here. I am extremely lazy. But that's to my advantage at times – I make

a virtue out of that sloth. If I were to go back and look at other people's work I would start to feel a bit constrained. I get easily intimidated by other people's brilliance. I'd try to recreate it, in a way, or I'd shrivel a little bit. It's just not useful for me to look at other people being good at stuff. But since I've done it, I've now been curious. And with a little distance, geographically and metaphorically, I have gone back and had a look at a few of the Masters in the past, particularly Roger Delgado.

What did you make of him?

☛ Well, Roger's just... he's up there. There are some similarities I've found with Roger, just because he's so arch, and quite camp. It's quite fun, nobody's taking it too seriously.

What kind of reaction have you had from the public?

☛ Really positive. Really warm. It's been very accepting.

No one's terrified of you, then?

☛ I have to confess I couldn't resist scaring the bejeezus out of a 12-year-old boy as we both reached for the last copy of *Doctor Who Magazine*. It was a close call, and he got it. It was actually going to be on the telly that night. He was deep in his magazine and I said, "Do you watch *Doctor Who*?" He said, "Yes." I said, "What's happening in it?" He said, "We're going to find out who Missy is." And then he turned round and looked at me and went, "You really look like Missy..." I said, "That's because I AM!" And it was Halloween. Happy Halloween! And he dropped his copy. And I picked it up. Yes, I'm getting a lot of love from 12-year-old boys at the moment.

Do you think there's a genuine sexual attraction between her and the Doctor or is it just psychological warfare on her part?

☛ You're reading something into it that I've never even thought of.

But didn't she snog him at one point?

☛ Yeah, but she'd snog anything! She'd happily snog a Dalek. There are no boundaries for Missy. No, I'm not so sure that was sexual. I think that was just another way for her to get his attention.

You get to work with the Daleks this year...

☛ My wee bobbly friends... They're so beautiful. My particular favourite is the black one. That just looks like perfect Prada. And there's a fabulous little blue and gold one, which is a little more Chloe... Missy's chosen which one will be her handbag. She'd probably make a Dalek into a handbag without much fuss. ●

Doctor Who returns to BBC One on 19 September.

Biodata

Occupation

→ Actress

Born

→ 21 April 1966

From

→ Glasgow, Scotland

Greatest hits

→ *The Acid House*, *The Book Group*, *Green Wing*, *Bad Education*

Random fact

→ Gomez isn't convinced the world is ready for a female Doctor: "I don't know about that," she tells *SFX*. "I really don't."

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CRIMSON PEAK

The HOUSE THAT
GUILLERMO
BUILT

Señor del Toro's putting a property on the market that's designed to terrify. Jamie Graham visits **CRIMSON PEAK**



Del Toro directing
Jessica Chastain as
Lady Lucille Sharpe.

I view the house as a butterfly trap,” says Guillermo del Toro, eyes gleaming behind thick lenses. “It encapsulates the characters. There are big spaces but at the same time, you need to feel suffocated. The house is constantly encircling the characters. It’s intrinsically designed. It’s full of tricks.”

Sat in a trailer on the Universal lot in LA, del Toro is discussing the crumbling mansion that serves as the centerpiece of his gothic-romance *Crimson Peak*. It’s a dank, daunting structure that he had built for real – a feat of production design all too rare in these CGI days – and within its mouldering walls lurk many ghosts. Metaphorical ghosts of the past, yes, but also ghosts from the spirit world, their blank eyes set upon the new arrival to the manor.

Crimson Peak is del Toro’s ninth feature and is more aligned to his smaller, Spanish-language films (*Cronos*, *The Devil’s Backbone*, *Pan’s Labyrinth*) than his big Hollywood productions (*Mimic*, the *Hellboy* movies, *Pacific Rim*). Admittedly it has international stars and a budget of \$50m, but it’s intimate and intricate and coloured with dark streaks of emotion.

Set at the dawn of the 20th century, *Crimson Peak* opens with young American authoress Edith Cushing (Mia Wasikowska) swept up by the charming attentions of Sir Thomas Sharpe (Tom Hiddleston), an Englishman travelling with his sister Lady Lucille (Jessica Chastain). Thomas and Edith marry and set off to the Sharpe manor in the north of England with Lucille. Given that del Toro cites the literary likes of *Bluebeard*, *Jane Eyre*, *Uncle Silas* and →



Admit it, you want a work desk that looks like this.

“The movie is the most audio-visually manicured I’ve ever made”

the pioneering work of Ann Radcliffe as influences, plus movies such as *Dragonwyck*, *The Innocents* and the endeavours of Hammer stalwart Terence Fisher, you just know there will be dark nights ahead.

“It is a movie that’s set in 1901, the moment of modernity,” explains del Toro. “It’s the turn of the century. It’s a landmark. Edith comes from a place of machines and locomotives and steam engines. She’s modern and she’s a suffragist. And then you have the old world. Thomas wants to be a futurist. He wants to build a machine. He wants to do all these things, but he is burdened by his past...”

The director screens some footage, a series of scenes that steal the breath. The star of the show is the house itself, its rotting walls bathed in lurid, sickly colours. The palette recalls the ornate fantasies of Italian horror maestro Mario Bava – a name del Toro has always cited as perhaps his biggest influence.

“Very early on, the director of photography [Dan Laustsen] and I decided on something that, now I tell you, you’re going to see it,” he smiles. “We used fluorescent light hidden behind furniture to light the walls. We came up with that very theatrical pattern. Then what we did, that is very modern, is we punched holes everywhere on the set for light to pour in and make it a very detailed, pinpointed light. And then I patched those holes in digital.”

Del Toro describes the colour palette as “post-acidic Technicolor”, and it stings the viewer’s widened eyes to look upon the “corroded gold and cyan and blues”. The effect he was after was one of a dark fairytale: “It could be *Beauty And The Beast*, almost,” he grins.

Talking of beasts, animal lust has a large part to play. *Crimson Peak* might look sublime but dark desires writhe beneath the painterly surface. As with Edgar Allan Poe’s tale *The Fall Of The House Of Usher*, convincingly realised by Roger Corman in the 1960 film starring Vincent Price, a whiff of incest can be detected in the narrative, while del Toro also honours the tradition of gothic romances being concerned with a virginal heroine’s sexual awakening at the hands of a tall, dark stranger. Sensual, yes, but also dangerous, violent.

The director nods. “In this movie, the camera style is very, very elegant, so it’s almost a throwback movie in a way, except for the sexuality and violence, and the graphic nature of the ghosts,” he says. “Other than that, it’s a book. It’s a perfect book that you would have rented in a library for a few days, and you could have read it with illustrations. The movie is the most audio-visually manicured that I’ve ever made. We did four final sound mixes, or five final mixes, depending on who you ask! I was not satisfied until I got to what I think is perfection.”

THE PRICE IS RIGHT

A perfection punctuated with violence. It was this clashing of tones that put Hollywood off when del Toro first started shopping *Crimson Peak* around in 2006 – selling a gothic romance is tricky enough, without it also being R-rated. There wasn’t a studio in town that would stump up a dime over \$30m until Legendary Pictures offered \$50m and complete autonomy. This last was essential to del Toro, for it was the clash of tones that excited him, just as it had in *Pan’s Labyrinth* when fantastical elements played against the backdrop of the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War. His passion is palpable as he throws out words like “jarring” and “visceral”, guaranteeing that *Crimson Peak*’s violence, though not lingered on, is ugly enough to elicit a real jolt.

But is he not himself a little worried as to *Crimson Peak*’s audience in this age of superheroes and space adventures?

“I never think like that,” he shrugs. “I always felt very comfortable with this movie being



Pacific Rim’s Charlie Hunnam plays Dr Alan McMichael.

HOME DISCOMFORTS

A GRIM HISTORY OF THE GOTHIC MANSION

—1764—

Horace Walpole’s **The Castle Of Otranto** is the first gothic novel.

—1840—

Sanity crumbles inside a decaying mansion in Poe’s **Fall Of The House Of Usher**.

—1897—

Bram Stoker’s vampire tale **Dracula** opens in the Count’s Transylvanian castle.



—1940—

Shadowy estate Manderley features the ghost of a dead wife in Hitchcock’s adaptation of Daphne Du Maurier’s **Rebecca**.

—1960—

Norman and his mother reside in a gothic structure that towers over the Bates Motel in **Psycho**.



—1963—

Turrets, blank windows and paranormal happenings in **The Haunting**.

—1974—

Leatherface’s charnel house looms large in **The Texas Chain Saw Massacre**.

—1980—

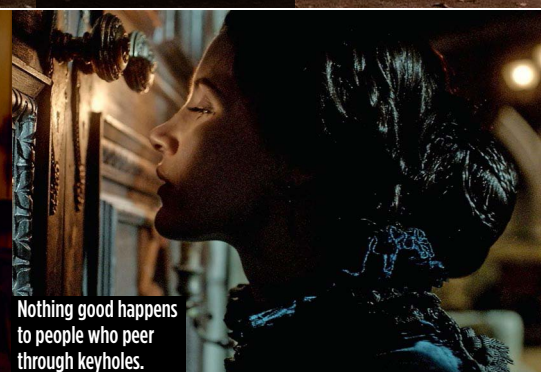
Mossy walls, soaring towers. Is it any wonder the house in **The Changeling** is haunted?

—2001—

The Others sees Nicole Kidman and her frail kids hide away in a fog-wreathed abode.

—2012—

Eel Marsh House and its dark inhabitant devour Daniel Radcliffe’s lawyer in **The Woman In Black**.



Nothing good happens to people who peer through keyholes.



That sound you hear is a thousand fans sighing at once.



Naked flames and long hair have got to be a bad combination.

PEAK PERFORMANCE

TOM HIDDLESTON talks del Toro, monsters and hauntings

How did you land the part of the tall, dark stranger?

→ Guillermo wrote to me in August 2013. He said, "I'm making this at the beginning of 2014. Just read it. Don't say yes or no. I'm going to send it to you tonight. Give yourself space to read it, and call me when you've read it, and let me know what you think."

Obviously you liked what you read!

→ He's the master. I got the script and I read it in one sitting. It was just immediately appealing. I could see it was totally from the most sophisticated part of his extraordinary imagination. It was very different from everything else I'd ever done. It was romantic. It was dark. It was a sophisticated exploration of the supernatural and sexuality within this gothic romance. I wrote to him. We talked about gothic literature for a long time!

This is quite a departure for you.

→ The exploration of gothic romance was quite new, to be honest. I've played a lot of soldiers, or certainly people who were fighters in some way. It was nice to break new territory emotionally and psychologically. And working with prosthetic make-up as well. There are extraordinary special make-up effects in the film. They're immaculately designed by David Martí and Montse Ribé, who did all that creature work on *Pan's Labyrinth*. I loved that, working with them. They have a skill level that I find completely dazzling.

Playing a character this haunted... Was it hard to get rid of him?

→ I'm aware... I think I've been doing it for long enough that I'm aware it's a fiction and I can take off the costume and have a shower and go, "Okay, it's time to have a hamburger and listen to some music or whatever!" **Jamie Graham**

R-rated. It is, for me, an adult movie. I don't think it's going to succeed or fail with a teenage audience because that's not ultimately the target. I hope the right type of teenager discovers it, but that doesn't necessarily mean somebody that's interested in a movie where there's a cut every two seconds."

When del Toro describes *Crimson Peak* as an adult movie, he means, also, that there is no easy division of good and evil. That would be simplistic, childish. One of his goals is to examine the "relativity of evil", and to ensure that even the darkest characters have their reasons. "You may end up liking 'evil' characters, finding humanity in them," he teases, and one of the scenes he presents has exactly this effect. No spoilers as to content here, but it is at once sedate, threatening and heartbreaking; even as you despise someone for their quietly menacing behaviour, you understand their own psychological torment and why it pushes them to act as they do.

In the characters' past lurk terrible events, and del Toro sees the house's physical ghosts as manifestations of these psychic traumas. He promises a "gallery of ghosts" and insists that they were all physically there, on set, for the actors to react to. This last is easy to believe when you know how important practical effects are to this filmmaker. It is less easy to countenance when you've watched footage of a ghost and can see right through it as it throws some truly sinister shapes in a doorway. Having shared his lighting tricks, del Toro is not about to give away another trade secret.

"Believe it or not, the ghost in the doorway is physical," he insists, laughing at the incredulity he's met with. His belief is that real interaction will strengthen performances and deepen emotions, which in turn will amplify scares.

So, is *Crimson Peak* scary? A gothic-romance is enticing, but a terrifying gothic-romance all the more so. "I can say *every* scare works," he confidently concludes. Coming from a man who's regarded not just as an immensely talented fantasy filmmaker but a modern master of horror, it's a thrilling claim. ●

Crimson Peak opens on 16 October.

STAR WARS

THE NEVER-END



ING STORY

Richard Edwards talks to some of the brave operatives tasked with bringing order to *Star Wars*' vast continuity

Star Wars has never just been about the movies. Within months of the original film changing cinema forever, Marvel comic books and novels like Alan Dean Foster's *Splinter Of The Mind's Eye* – a tale of Kaiburr crystals, hanging out with Yuzzem, and Luke lopping off Darth Vader's arm – were off exploring parts of the galaxy the movies never reached. The Expanded Universe was born.

The EU would become a vast, sprawling beast. Many characters found themselves with histories and the story continued beyond *Return Of The Jedi*, as Luke got married, Leia and Han had twins and Boba Fett famously escaped a thousand years of pain and suffering in the belly of the Sarlacc. There would eventually be contradictions between sources, and debates over what counted as canon – if it happened in the movies it was gospel; pretty much everything else could be open to reinterpretation. In other words, don't bet on Mara Jade cropping up in *The Force Awakens* just because you've met her in the books.

Then, after Disney bought the keys to the *Star Wars* empire, new Lucasfilm boss Kathleen Kennedy announced a plan so audacious it made doing the Kessel Run in less than 12 parsecs look a doddle. The movies would no longer occupy their own rarefied “more important than everything else” status in *Star Wars* canon, as new films, books, comics and TV shows would fit into one, all-encompassing continuity. (The old Expanded Universe novels still exist, but as a separate “Legends” line.)

“It's definitely exciting, because this kind of cohesive approach is something we've always aspired to,” says Pablo Hidalgo, a member of the Lucasfilm “Story Group” set up to be the arbiters of *Star Wars* canon. “In the past, →

On the hunt for Death Star plans with the cast of *Star Wars: Rogue One*.



Lando writer Charles Soule describes him as the "coolest character in all of *Star Wars*".



Kieron Gillen's *Vader* comic does *not* cover Darth's stint as a DJ.

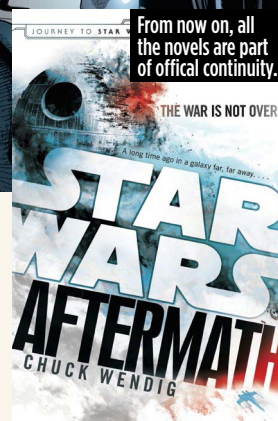
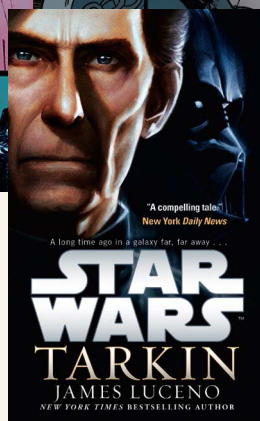
you'd have multiple levels of authenticity, because we didn't have this connective group acting as a bridge between film and television projects and what was happening in books, comics and games. We're better set up for this different approach, where every *Star Wars* story could be a gateway into the same universe, the same big picture."

Since the new continuity kicked off we've seen (among others) a novel focusing on Grand Moff Tarkin (*Tarkin*), and Marvel comics centred on Darth Vader, Princess Leia and Lando Calrissian – not to mention the pre-*A New Hope* *Star Wars* *Rebels* on the telly. With so many media to choose from, how do they decide what goes where?

"There are attributes to a story that make it clear where it wants to live," explains Hidalgo. "A political story like *Tarkin* worked best in a novel, whereas [*Rebels* hero] Kanan's life after Order 66 works better as a comic. The story will tell you where it wants to be told."

TELLING STORIES

"Lucasfilm/Disney makes the ultimate decisions on where to tell what stories," says Del Rey books editor Shelly Shapiro. "When we come up with ideas for a story we'd like to tell in a novel, we propose it to



Lucasfilm and the Story Group. If it's approved – or approved with tweaking – we move ahead to hire an author and hammer out the actual storyline with the author. So far, everyone (books, comics, games) has been playing very nicely together in the *Star Wars* sandbox."

"The process is definitely organic," adds Hidalgo. "It starts with working with filmmakers, and finding a story that they are passionate about. That forms the core storytelling and other stories naturally flow out of those projects. One thing we're not interested in doing is filling gaps for the sake of filling gaps."

That said, there are now some intriguing uncharted time periods in the *Star Wars* universe, such as the lead-up to *A New Hope* (when next year's "Anthology" movie *Rogue One* will be set) or the aftermath of Palpatine's demise. But with such established characters, how much freedom does a writer actually have?

"It varies from project to project," says Shapiro. "In general, we have a lot of freedom to create, but the results are looked at very carefully by

Lucasfilm and the Story Group. So free and yet not so free at the same time. Which makes sense – we have to be sure that what we're doing in the books jibes smoothly with what is being expressed in movies, comics, games, even toys. Our goal is to be part of creating the larger universe of *Star Wars*."

"It's all challenging," continues Chuck Wendig, who picked up the story after the Emperor and Darth Vader's demise in his new novel *Star Wars: Aftermath*. "This is not only somebody else's sandbox, but it's a sandbox created by Lucas and then one that literally millions of people have imagined themselves playing in. So to

get to jump in with my own narrative action figures and create a story there, it's completely overwhelming. But in the best way possible."

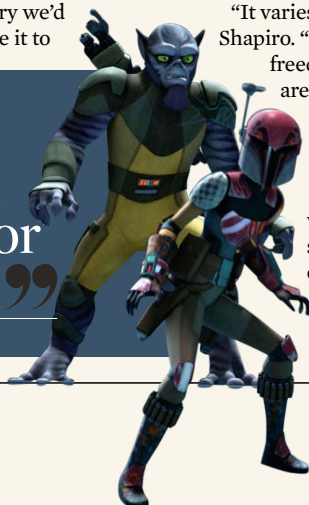
While *Aftermath* is predominantly focused on new characters, however, Kieron Gillen is writing for one of the most iconic characters in popular culture. Set between *A New Hope* and *The Empire Strikes Back*, *Darth Vader* picks up the Sith Lord's story after Han Solo sent his TIE Fighter spinning.

"We pitched freely in that [time period], but I'm a writer who knows how story works," says Gillen. "There's a start to this story – Vader, disgraced, after the loss of the Death Star. There's an end to this story – Vader, on the bridge of the Executor, more powerful than ever, hunting his son across the universe. I'm not going to pitch a story that doesn't tell how Darth Vader got from one to another, y'know? Even with my reputation, I'm not going to suggest an arc where Darth Vader packs it in and becomes a superstar DJ in the *Star Wars*ian equivalent of Ibiza."

KEEPING TRACK

Once a writer's working on their story, the Story Group remains on hand to keep tone and continuity consistent. One of the Story Group, Leland Chee, has created an in-house database called the "Holocron". "We also have plenty of documents, spreadsheets and whiteboard maps," says Hidalgo. "And some of us just have really good memories for this stuff."

“We’re not interested in filling gaps for the sake of it”





"NICE TO SEE A FAMILIAR FACE"

Star Wars characters already active in the new-look EU (POSSIBLE SPOILERS)

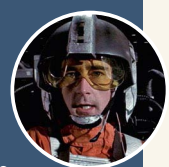
BOBA FETT

→ Vader's "no disintegrations" instruction to Fett in *The Empire Strikes Back* always implied the pair had history and sure enough, the Sith Lord hires the coolest bounty hunter in the galaxy to track down Luke Skywalker in the *Darth Vader* comic.



WEDGE ANTILLES

→ Luke Skywalker's pilot chum (and veteran of all three original movies) is a key player in *Star Wars: Aftermath*, where he finds more than he bargained for when his hunt for rogue Imperials uncovers a major plot to re-establish the organisation.



LOBOT

→ Turns out Lando's cybernetically enhanced mate was at his side well before he got into the gas-mining racket - Lobot is a major part of Marvel's *Lando* series, helping him to be a better class of scoundrel.



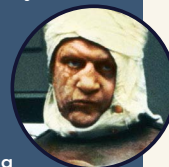
NIEN NUNB

→ Lando's *Return Of The Jedi* co-pilot is revealed in the *Princess Leia* comic to be a smuggler who helps reunite the last remaining survivors of Alderaan, post-Death Star. We're hoping we find out what he finds so damn funny.



DENGAR

→ The bounty hunter has already cropped up in *The Clone Wars*, and has a cameo in *Aftermath* - knowing he's still alive gives us hope he might one day get to ask Boba Fett to be his best man as in the old EU.



"There was lots of back and forth," says Wendig. "We're trying to thread a needle here - forging the path ahead for the galaxy and also building into the lead-up to *The Force Awakens*. That means a lot of finessing and conversation as to how that happens just right."

"It's always a developing relationship," explains Gillen. "Especially early on, I pitched some characters to be involved I suspected we wouldn't get, but we wanted to see what the limits were. By now, it's very much a more fluid thing, with information passing back and forth. I'll do things like 'Right, I'm going to create a crime boss here, but if you think there's someone elsewhere in the canon you want to see here, that's great.' They're incredibly generous with ideas and information, while also encouraging us to invent."

"I invent a lot of minor characters, and then tend to kill them off equally quickly. People sharing a stage with Darth Vader don't really have a great life expectancy! For major characters, they'll be in the proposal. Generally speaking, it's additive. I'll pitch why a character is interesting and necessary, and they'll make it more interesting and necessary."

THEN AND NOW

George Lucas aside, Dave Filoni has possibly had his hands on more new *Star Wars* mythology than anybody else. As supervising director on the *The Clone Wars*, he oversaw 121 episodes of Jedi action - equivalent to about 20 movies - and has now moved onto *Star Wars Rebels*. He's therefore in a unique position to compare two eras of *Star Wars* storytelling.

"*Clone Wars* was very different," he says. "Before, there was basically George and I. When I had a problem or needed an answer, I'd just call George and ask him about it. And if George said that was it, that was pretty much it! There was no big debate necessarily."

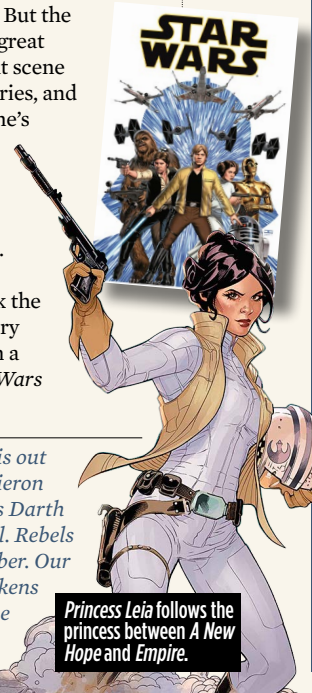
"What we have now is an opportunity to have a group of people come together that all love *Star Wars* and know it well. We all know that no one person is going to be able to replace George, the guy that created this story. I have found it tremendously collaborative and rather exciting... I think it's opened up our story a bit. It's taken some of the pressure off because now you're working as a team."

Though writing and managing the *Star Wars* universe must seem like a dream job for a fan, we can see one slight drawback - you'll never get to experience a new story as a newbie.

"I wouldn't trade it for the world," counters Hidalgo. "Here's an example: I knew Ahsoka would be coming down the Ghost's ladder well before a single episode of *Rebels* even aired. That's just how it goes. But the day the idea was pitched is a great memory, getting to watch that scene come together is great memories, and then getting to watch everyone's reaction when that episode aired is a great memory too."

"It's been fun to be here and talk to the Story Group about *Star Wars*," adds Filoni. "We all love *Star Wars* and we want to get it right. I think the one thing everyone in the Story Group has in common is such a tremendous respect for *Star Wars* and its legacy." ●

Aftermath by Chuck Wendig is out now and reviewed on p108. Kieron Gillen and Salvador Larroca's *Darth Vader* is ongoing from Marvel. *Rebels* returns to Disney XD in October. Our countdown to *The Force Awakens* continues next month with the story behind the creation of the *Millennium Falcon*.



THE ART OF MAGIC

Artist Jim Kay tells Stephen Jewell about the inspirations behind his new *Harry Potter* illustrations

Growing up, artist Jim Kay enjoyed drawing pictures of spaceships and other fantastic environments with his best friend. "Occasionally, we'd create bits in Lego or cardboard to get our heads around the logistics of it," he tells *SFX*. "It was like *Minecraft* '80s style, and it's a technique I still use today." Now, after winning the Kate Greenaway Medal for Illustration for his collaboration with Patrick Ness on *A Monster Calls*, the artist is bringing JK Rowling's beloved *Harry Potter* saga to spectacular life in a series of illustrated editions, starting with first instalment *Harry Potter And The Philosopher's Stone*. Here he explains how he gave the book a fresh lick of paint.

HERMIONE GRANGER

→ "Designing the characters has been tricky, because they have to age over the series, and for that I need real children as references. Luckily my niece Milly was perfect for Hermione. When you illustrate a book you try to add something extra to the text, and the brief mention of Hermione creating a blue flame in a jar appealed to me, as I could illustrate something in parallel to the story, rather than the usual straight depiction of described events."

HAGRID FIRING AN UMBRELLA AT DUDLEY

→ "I'm very conscious that in book one, I'm presenting my version of the *Potter* world, and so I need to have a number of illustrations that clearly portray my characters to sell that version. This can become a tad static though, so every now and again I like to throw paint about. This scene of Dudley Dursley getting hit by some magic is one such opportunity, but the irony is that apparently spontaneous-looking illustrations take a lot more labour than some of the more detailed scenes."

DIAGON ALLEY

→ "I love architecture, and I used both existing buildings found in London and Edinburgh, and those now long gone but preserved in old daguerreotypes [early photographs] or museums. It's the details I enjoy drawing: the needle and thread running through the roof of Madame Malkin's, the cats watching a caged bird. I usually derive little joy in 'finishing' an illustration, but drawing Diagon Alley was a pleasure."

FLOURISH & BLOTTS

→ "Flourish & Blotts is an iconic establishment in the series, so the building has to stand out. Initially inspired by [18th century artist] Allan Ramsay's house in Edinburgh, I did a wonky drawing in pencil and then redrew it several times before going back to the original wonky drawing. I figured the bookshop would receive a high volume of correspondence by owl, and so catered for the birds with their own dormer nest boxes. My old greyhound Leroy can also be seen sleeping outside."

DRACO MALFOY

→ "Draco is based upon a striking man from Oxfordshire called Ollie. I've tweaked him to fit Rowling's description, and I tried to make his eyes as symmetrical as possible, just to unsettle the reader. I was thinking of *The Midwich Cuckoos* while working on it. There's a danger in children's books that evil characters are often portrayed as physically deformed in some way, but with Malfoy I could portray a flawed person in a normal but cold guise."

THE COVER

→ "Why I decided to paint a crowded platform at three-point perspective with a deadline looming is anyone's guess! To help me, I made a model of the train and the platform out of foam board, and populated it with plastic army figures. I then illuminated it, and got painting as fast as I could. Harry is the only fully rendered person in the scene, as I hastily under-painted everyone else in oil or acrylic. I intended to finish them but ran out of time, so don't tell anyone!"

Harry Potter And The Philosopher's Stone: Illustrated Edition is published on 6 October.



Rewinding Neverland

Don't expect **PAN** to be the story you grew up with. Matt Maytum has the details

Adapting a literary classic is a ballsy enough move, let alone reinventing one entirely. But director Joe Wright didn't have any reservations about taking on a wildly revisionist origin story for JM Barrie's *Peter Pan*. After all, this is someone who has already adapted his own screen versions of such revered texts as *Pride & Prejudice*, *Atonement* and *Anna Karenina*. According to Wright, directing *Pan* didn't feel like a bold, daring move. "If there is source material, as is the case with a number of my films, then I'll go back and read it again," says Wright, when *SFX* meets him in the library of London's Soho Hotel. "I wouldn't want to do something that completely bastardises the intention or the tone of the writer. But I think it's okay to mess with the structure, the exoskeleton of it."

In fact, the origin of this particular reboot started some time before the script landed on Wright's desk. Pitching to Warner Bros executive Sarah Schechter, fledgling screenwriter Jason Fuchs – whose biggest previous scripting credit was as a co-writer on *Ice Age: Continental Drift* – shared his idea for a prequel. "She had a meeting with him and said, 'If you could write a script – any script – what would it be?'" recounts Wright. "He immediately pitched *Pan*, something that he'd been thinking about over a number of years. He was 25 at the time. He had →



this energy and this ambition as well, the script was full of these crazy, wonderful and heartfelt ideas – it had the energy of youth.”

The ubiquity of JM Barrie’s story and its characters means that there aren’t many people in the western world who don’t at least have a passing knowledge of it, be it from the Disney animation, Barrie’s original play, or the myriad alternative versions. “I can’t quite put my finger on how I was aware of it,” says Wright. “I remember seeing a really bad production of it, a panto with an over-made-up young lady swinging around in green tights – a grown woman going, ‘Ooh, I’m young forever!’ She must have been about 35.”

ALL CHANGE

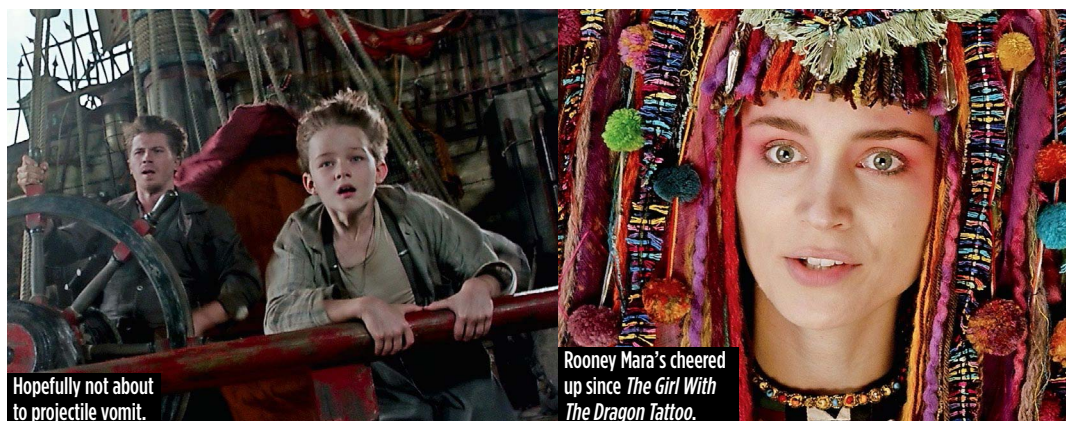
So, how far will *Pan* veer from the story we all grew up with? If the 10-minute sizzle reel *SFX* saw is anything to go by, drastically is the answer. The footage contained no green tights, no Tinker Bell, and a good-guy Captain James Hook who currently has both hands intact. It all kicks off in London, around the time of World War Two. As a baby, Peter is left by his mother in the doorwell of an orphanage, the sort of place that even *Oliver Twist* would likely give a poor TripAdvisor rating. Peter’s time there is set to be limited anyway: when he’s 12 years old (and played by young Australian newcomer Levi Miller), a whole bunch of orphans are kidnapped by bungeeing pirates who whisk them off to Neverland on a pirate ship that can sail through the skies. Arriving in a Neverland work camp, it’s here that Peter meets ostentatious dandy pirate Blackbeard (Hugh Jackman, with a shaved head, twirly beard and plastered on make-up), befriends young James Hook (a roguish Garrett Hedlund) and discovers he might just be a prophesised chosen one – “the Pan” – set to liberate Neverland from evil.

If the idea of this reinvention was bold, it’s nothing in comparison to the style. Wright’s previous films are known for their impressive



He’s behind you! Blackbeard (Hugh Jackman) sneaks up on Peter (Levi Miller).

“I tried hard not to be cool, and to access the childish part of myself”

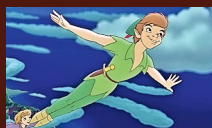


Hopefully not about to projectile vomit.

Rooney Mara’s cheered up since *The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo*.

THE STORY THAT NEVER GETS OLD

Five more takes on *Peter Pan*



The cartoon classic PETER PAN 1953

→ Forget Paramount’s 1924 silent adaptation, the Disney animation is considered the definitive *Pan* adap. Yes, Peter himself was a bit annoying, but there’s so much iconic imagery here, and it’s pretty faithful to Barrie.



The alternative take HOOK 1991

→ Spielberg’s starry film examines what happens *after* Peter leaves Neverland. Growing up to become a grouchy lawyer, Peter later returns to the magical kingdom to save his kidnapped kids.



The classical live-action version PETER PAN 2003

→ Adapted with reverence for the source material, this has some handsome flourishes but never quite soars. Still, Jason Isaacs makes for a fine Captain Hook/Mr Darling.



The actual origin story FINDING NEVERLAND 2004

→ Johnny Depp makes a decent fist of a Scottish accent to play Barrie in a biopic that zeroes in on the writing of the original play. This one’ll hit you right in the tear ducts.



The live-action oddity PETER PAN LIVE! 2014

→ This didn’t so much get a critical drubbing as a collective “WUT!” Performed live on NBC, the accents, interminable songs and trippy-looking crocodile all garnered abuse on Twitter.



visuals and gasp-worthy costumes, but *Pan* is one step beyond anything he's done before, simply in terms of the scale. From the rock song-singing pirates, to the impossibly-hued dresses of Tiger Lily's community, to the full-scale Neverland sets built in Cardington, Bedfordshire, it's a riot of colour and set design. And while Wright might not have found the revisiting of *Peter Pan* to be a particularly nerve-wracking task, the sheer scale of the project was a cause for concern. "What was very daunting was taking a film of this scale, using CGI which I'd never done before," admits Wright. "I've made films before but to suddenly be on a set like that... It's kind of weird and wonderful. It made me feel a bit scared as well," he laughs.

With Peter at the centre of the story, the whole film was fashioned as a projection of his imagination, so the overriding perspective was that of a young boy in the '40s. "It's not that kind of teenage cool," explains Wright. "It's far freer than that. So I tried very hard not to be cool, and to access that childish part of myself." With that brief in mind, the adult characters became ridiculous, scary, and rarely anything in between. It's why Hugh Jackman was given free rein to cut loose with Blackbeard. It's why Garrett Hedlund's Hook has a matinee idol quality. And it's why Rooney Mara wears such impossible headdresses as Tiger Lily. While there might be real-world touchpoints, it's all filtered through a child's imagination. It's something that Wright has first-hand experience of. "When my kids play a game, whether they're soldiers or pirates or whatever they are, they're really in it. If you try to get them out to have dinner or a bath or something, it's a nightmare, because they're so immersed in their imaginative world."

PROPERLY SCARY

Wright went for a similar approach when it came to ramping up the darkness, and making Hugh Jackman's villain one that aims to genuinely terrify the kids. "He's really dark, which I felt was important because my son was suffering from night terrors at the time," says Wright. "The point is that it's really scary, but through the narrative, you overcome those fears. You reflect those fears in the first place, and over the journey, you overcome them through wit and bravery and so on."

Wright is non-committal about the possibility of a sequel, admitting that he hasn't mapped out exactly how the characters will reach a point where they join up with the JM Barrie original. "I wasn't thinking about if there would ever be a sequel, which liberated me from such concerns," he admits. But he does explain why he thinks nostalgic fairy stories have become such big business of late. "It's funny, when I started working on *The Little Mermaid* [he's no longer attached to the project], there really hadn't been any, and then they mushroomed. I think it's partly because filmmakers want stories that they can explore new technology with. Also, I think they're stories that make people feel safe, in a good way." Maybe, deep down, we never really want to grow up. ●

Pan opens on 16 October.

TALK LIKE A PIRATE

HUGH JACKMAN is Blackbeard



Did you have any say in your appearance as Blackbeard?

→ I did have a say in it. But I will be honest with you, when I met Joe [Wright] for the first time, I said, "Explain the world, explain Neverland to me." He had a picture of my face with white make-up like an old painting that was cracked. I had the wig of Marie Antoinette and the costume of Louis XIV. I was like, "I'm in!"

How is *Pan* different from other versions of the story?

→ We were given licence because it's an origin story. For example, there's one line on page 53 of the JM Barrie book that says, "Hook learned his trade as the bosun for Blackbeard." So there was freedom for us to do what we wanted.

Will Blackbeard scare kids?

→ It should be frightening a little bit – uncomfortable. It's got equal parts silliness and imagination, as well as being a little frightening. That's the role of fairytales.

How was it shooting the action scenes?

→ When I was at drama school, I loved fencing. I was a pretty good fencer, I don't mind telling you. And I've never done it until here, so I loved doing the training. And then Joe had this idea... Blackbeard's ship, every time he defeats another ship, he rips off the mast and places it as a trophy. So the front of his ship has 30 spikes going out. It looks incredible.



Brought



To Book

ANN LECKIE

The novelist tells us how winning several awards has changed her life

Words by Jonathan Wright // Photography by Will Ireland

It's stranger than it once was being Ann Leckie. While being a successful science fiction novelist may not quite bring Kim Kardashian levels of fame, it's still made the American writer a public figure. "In the right settings, I can't go unrecognised," she says. "And now when I meet someone there's a good chance the reaction won't be, 'Nice to meet you,' but, 'OMG, you're Ann Leckie?!' Which is weird, because I'm just me, right?"

Indeed she is, it's just that in the wake of the huge success of her debut novel, *Ancillary Justice*, which won the (deep breath now) Hugo, Nebula, BSFA, Clarke and Locus awards, her life has inevitably changed. And really, she isn't grumbling too much here. "Of course it's also terribly flattering, and I absolutely don't want to sound like I'm complaining, because in a lot of ways I'm having the kind of experience a lot of us dream of having," she adds.

To get an idea of what she means, consider the anticipation surrounding the publication of *Ancillary Mercy*, the third and final part of her space opera featuring Breq, AI and a fragment of a starship's consciousness. Fans *really* want to know what happens, not that Leckie is giving too much away when *SFX* asks for her take on the new novel.

"That is a surprisingly difficult question to answer," she says. "But in some respects I'm still working with the themes of the first novel – what makes a person a person? And what does that even mean? Who is anyone anyway? Although that does sound awfully serious, and I do hope my readers have fun reading..."

PUPPIES CONTROVERSY

As well as dealing with anticipation, another facet of success is being asked about controversies. In which context, *SFX* is compelled by the laws of journalistic imperative to quiz her about the sound and fury generated by the selection process for the Hugos, which saw a group of right-wing authors, the so-called "Sad Puppies", calling on fans to nominate candidates who shared their political agenda.

Leckie's take on what occurred is that "the Hugos are about what the Hugo voters love". This is their strength, "But it's not the nomination and the award that produce the regard of readers – the regard has to come first."

As for those who think themselves somehow excluded from the Hugos, Leckie gives them short shrift. "A lot of pixels have been spilled about the political aspect of this – the (frankly nonsense) assertion in certain quarters that political correctness and affirmative action have hijacked science fiction and no conservative SF author can win – but honestly I think that's a smokescreen," she says.

"I mean, I don't doubt some folks have convinced themselves that's the reason they're not multiple Hugo winners by now, but I think in the end it's about a few people thinking they ought to have the field's highest honours and being put out when they haven't gotten them. And thinking changing that was a matter of kicking the vending machine hard enough. It's sad, really."

A far more supportive aspect of the SF community is revealed when *SFX* asks Leckie if she's been sought out by fellow women writers because her breakthrough proves hard SF isn't just for the boys.

"I've received a lot of help and advice from other writers all along, many, maybe most, of them women," she says. "I definitely want to pay that forward."

"I'll say, though, that quite a few people would dispute your assertion that I write hard SF – I have even overheard several folks insist that the *Ancillary* books aren't really SF at all, which I find baffling. I can see not classing them as 'hard' but not SF at all? [It's] pretty inexplicable..."

A WINDING CAREER

Indeed it is, especially as it's difficult to think of a major new writer more steeped in SF than Leckie, even if her biologist parents were rather snippy about the science in science fiction when she was growing up, and preferred to read mystery novels.

Their daughter, though, didn't follow her parents' professional lead. Instead, she took a music degree and, at least initially, wound up working as a waitress. As an introvert, it was work that "made a huge difference for my being much more comfortable dealing with people," but was also tiring and "frustrating". She quit the day jobs when her children, now teenagers, came along and she realised it'd cost money to go back to work because of childcare costs.

In short, and considering she didn't get published as a novelist until she was in her forties, Leckie's success has been hard won, worked towards via short fiction and attendance at the Clarion West Writers Workshop. The hard work really has paid off, to the point where Leckie could probably just churn out *Ancillary* books forever. Which is something she has no interest in doing.

"I do very much not want to just write the same book over and over," she says, "but I feel like one of the advantages of the universe I've built so far is that it's huge – I could stay in that universe and still do any number of incredibly different things." ●

Ancillary Mercy is published in October.

Biodata

Occupation

→ Novelist

Born

→ 1966, Ohio

From

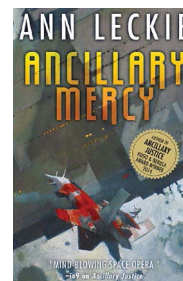
→ St Louis

Greatest Hits

→ *Ancillary Justice*, the first part of a trilogy that has continued with *Ancillary Sword* and *Ancillary Mercy*, took five major awards.

Random Fact

→ Leckie has no regrets about not having followed a musical career: "I love to sing, but holy cow, I mean the people that do it, that must be incredibly stressful and it's so competitive."



“IT’S NOT THE
AWARD THAT
PRODUCES
THE REGARD
OF READERS –
THE REGARD
HAS TO
COME FIRST”



THE BLACK HOLE

Disney's **THE BLACK HOLE** went up against *Star Trek* – and lost. Sean Egan recalls the bold ambitions of a flawed sci-fi blockbuster

Licester Square, December 1979. Two films opening opposite each other seem equally destined to lucratively ride the sci-fi wave set in motion by *Star Wars*. One is the long-awaited first *Star Trek* film, the other a product of the Walt Disney studio, a byword for success.

Star Trek: The Motion Picture transpires to be a curiously flat affair devoid of the zip of the TV series, while the Disney movie lives up to its promise of some of the most spectacular visuals ever seen on the big screen. Yet, paradoxically, where *Star Trek* was the opening instalment of a massive film franchise that continues to this day, Disney's *The Black Hole* disappeared into the folds of history. Within a short span of time, few outside of geekdom remembered it, let alone the fact that it was once considered serious competition to Kirk and co.

The Black Hole started life as a project called *Space Probe One*, devised for Disney by Bob Barbash and Richard Landau. It had a troubled history of script development, as Jeb Rosebrook found out in

Black Hole gum cards: better than the gum.





February 1977 when he was hired to be “the fifth writer” on the film. He had no SF experience but says of his appointment, “*Space Probe* was falling down because it didn’t have real character development.”

For all their successes, Disney had little experience of big-budget, live-action movies. It was presumably because of this that they allowed a long, meticulous pre-production process. Rosebrook worked office hours at Disney for a total of 13 months.

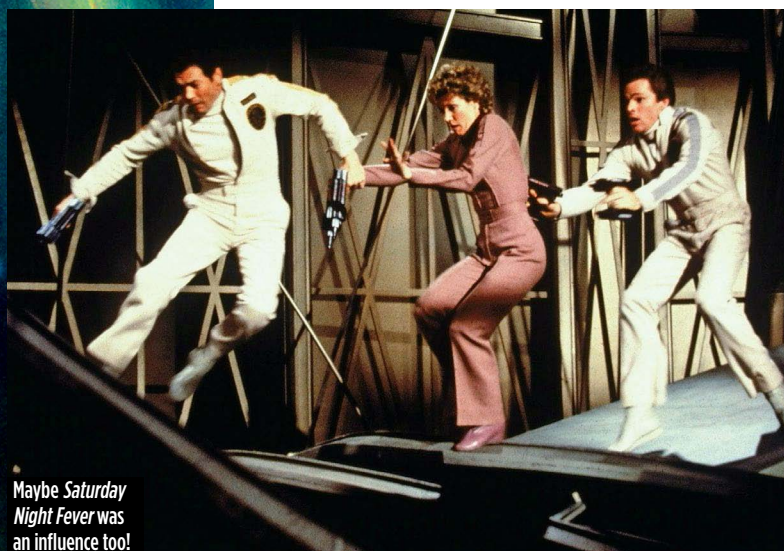
At the start, he was liaising with director John Hough. However, Rosebrook states positively: “Peter Ellenshaw was running the show.” Of the Oscar-winning production designer, Rosebrook says, “It’s like the art and the script were together. He designed the spaceship, the robots... Everything was translated from the page.” Later, Ellenshaw’s son Harrison would be employed as matte artist on the film.



Among the concepts Rosebrook gave his colleague to bring to life were a good robot and a bad robot. “I created Old BOB and Maximilian.” BiO-sanitation Battalion was an ancient, creaking, outer-space Dusty Bin with a Wild West syntax and an air of innocence. He would be voiced by Slim Pickens. Maximilian was a hulking crimson automaton who, though silent, exuded malice through his glowing rectangular single eye. “I brought in Old BOB to be a little bit of levity to play off of VINCENT,” Rosebrook says in reference to Vital Information Necessary CENTralized, another Dusty Bin-a-like, as perennially feisty as Old BOB was permanently terrified. *Planet Of The Apes* actor Roddy McDowall voiced his dialogue.

Despite the comedy foil, Rosebrook says, “As a result of Maximilian, it became much darker.” He adds, “As we went further along it became apparent that we were really doing *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* out in space. Maybe that was the original intent.”

Maximilian answered to Dr Hans Reinhardt, Captain Nemo-like in being a bearded, larger-than-life scientist with an obsessive personality. That he was played by →



Maybe *Saturday Night Fever* was an influence too!

“We decided we weren’t going to show any portion of the film in the trailer”

Maximilian Schell suggests a piece of casting involving subliminal name-association.

Reinhardt is the commander of long-lost spaceship USS Cygnus. The USS Palomino discovers it sitting on the edge of a black hole. When the Palomino crew come aboard, they encounter a craft populated only by Reinhardt and a retinue of robots, the most striking of which are the blank-faced, medieval-style garbed administration automatons. Reinhardt reveals that he intends to take to the max the philosophy of exploring new territory by guiding the Cygnus through the black hole. Dr Alex Durant (Anthony Perkins), the Palomino’s civilian leader, is enthusiastic about this plan despite all scientific orthodoxy insisting it will be a suicide mission.

The issue becomes moot when pulling off an admin robot’s face-mask horrifyingly confirms Old BOB’s contention that the crew of the Cygnus had not set off for home but had, in fact, been lobotomised and enslaved by Reinhardt as punishment for not going along with his plans.

“In the original, the crew of the Palomino were sucked into the black hole and miraculously they got away and that was the end of that one,” Rosebrook recalls. After spending three months working on the first draft of his script, Rosebrook, along with Hough, was called into the office of producer Ron Miller, who seemed underwhelmed. Rosebrook: “Miller said, ‘How much different is this than anything else we’ve done?’ And Hough and I looked at each other and probably at the same time came up with the same thought: what if we went through the black hole?”

Rosebrook and Harrison Ellenshaw proceeded to discuss an ending which purported to show what someone would find coming out the other end of a black hole. “Harrison had this idea that the screen would be all white and the camera would pull back and the white was a grain of sand and then gradually it turned black, and you pulled back from that and that was lava. What we were after was the beginning of time.”

At this point, Hough dropped out. The replacement director was Gary Nelson. “Gary arrived eight weeks or so before I was dismissed,” says Rosebrook. His disappointment is evident as he laments, “I don’t know exactly what I did wrong.”

Gerry Day was subsequently called in to do what Rosebrook terms a “polish rewrite”. Gary Nelson claims, “A lot of the technical stuff and what I call the interesting sequences were things that I had come up with. Harrison Ellenshaw was very helpful on the project. We just brainstormed it for about six months before we went into production.”

HOLE AGAIN Into the remake

→ “They’ve been talking about it for three or four years,” says Gary Nelson of Disney’s potential remake of *The Black Hole*. “It would be wonderful. I think the reason that they haven’t gone forward with it is that nobody can come up with a real good concept about what the film’s going to be about.”

Rosebrook shares Nelson’s cautious enthusiasm. “You’re dealing today with movies like *Gravity*,” he says. “You’ve got challenges from technology and storytelling far bigger than in 1979. And yet the idea of going through the black hole and creating something that nobody has ever created – you could have a winner.”

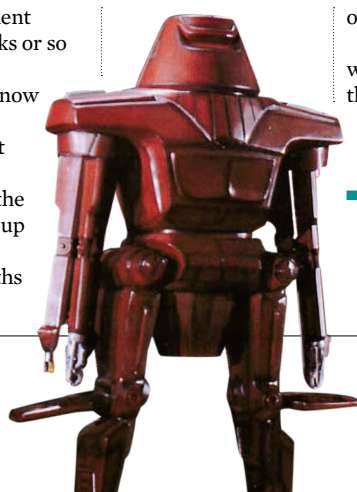
Poster art promising all sorts of killing fun.

Long before the days of CGI, Nelson was tasked with making floating robots and collapsing spacecraft look believable. “It made for a much longer shoot because we were breaking new ground,” Nelson says. “We were very careful not to [show] wires. We would do sequences where the [set] would be upside down and if there were any small wires that we used to levitate people or objects, instead of going to the top of the screen they went to the bottom of the screen. Therefore it was also easy to disguise it.”

Nelson and his colleagues also concocted some beautiful, otherworldly vistas, particularly the vast, lustrous command deck of the Cygnus.

Nelson says, “We didn’t have an end to the picture until we were almost finished ... We didn’t reveal it to anybody at the studio.”

The finale chosen was both intriguing and bewildering: a surreal journey through the black hole leaves Reinhardt trapped inside his own robot on a fiery landscape while, before flying to safety, the good guys travel through a glittering hallway, resident in which





You need a Hans:
Maximilian Schell
as Dr Reinhardt.

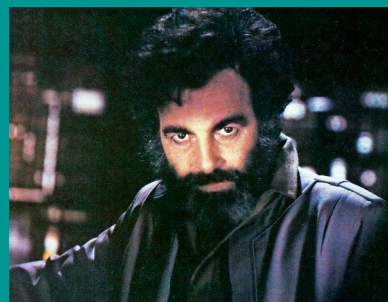
MAX POWER

Playing the Schell game

→ An approach to Austrian actor Maximilian Schell suggested he was already close in personality to Reinhardt, *The Black Hole's* magisterial, humourless scientist.

Nelson: "He said he would only do it if he met with the director before he signed on. I said, 'Can you come to LA?' He said, 'No, I'm filming at the moment.' I said, 'Perhaps we could meet halfway?' He said, 'Halfway is the middle of the Atlantic.' I said, 'Well perhaps we could meet on your U-boat?' And there was this long transatlantic silence."

Despite the awkward exchange, Schell signed on and turned out to be one of the film's high points.



Better shots than
Stormtroopers?

is a long-haired, robed figure. The heaven-and-hell symbolism might seem a risible symptom of one-dimensional Disney morality, but Nelson gives the impression that there wasn't that much reasoning behind the meaning of the imagery. Asked if the audience is meant to infer that black holes are gateways to the hereafter, he shrugs, "Well it might seem that way. I don't know. A lot of it is imagination. I don't think we deliberately tried to say anything very, very specific."

As well as being perplexed by the ending, Rosebrook would be disappointed by the beginning. "They took out the first five to ten pages that I wrote, so none of the characters – other than Maximilian Schell and to a degree Perkins – developed the real characters that I had in mind."

"Dialogue can get pretty fucking boring after a while," argues Nelson.

Nelson attempted to carry over into the film's promotion some of the mystique he had cultivated during filming, where he had operated a closed set. "We weren't going to show any portion of the film in the trailer," he says. Attempts were also made to dispel the kids-stuff aura associated with Disney. "We deliberately sought a PG rating... We even changed it to not 'A Walt Disney Production' but 'Buena Vista'."

However, a private test preview in Portland, Oregon, was scuppered when the studio took out a large newspaper

advertisement emblazoned with the Disney name. "I got pissed off and threatened to pull the film out of the theatre," reveals Nelson.

Unusually for an American film, *The Black Hole's* world premiere was in London. Nelson says the interstellar face-off with *Star Trek* was coincidence. Nor was he worried by the synchronicity. "I thought we'd have basically the same audience, but with our picture it's kind of fresh ground."

That fresh ground, unfortunately, caught the public's eye less than a largely charisma-free cast, laughably anthropomorphic robots, stilted dialogue ("What basis in fact do you have for these macabre speculations?"), a jarringly abrupt ending and – almost unforgivably – a depiction of the black hole itself that was insipid. Meanwhile, for all the research that had gone into the script (space experts like Carl Sagan, Stephen Hawking and astronaut Gordon Cooper were among those consulted), its science was derided by experts.

Nelson admits that the public reception was not what he and Disney had been hoping for. "It was mediocre. Everyone expected bigger things to happen." However, he adds, "It did very well," even if this was partly because, "it didn't cost half of what *Star Trek* cost to make."

The afterlife granted *The Black Hole* by TV showings, video, DVD and internet discussion forums has engendered some degree of re-evaluation. The sumptuous visual feast it constitutes (the hole aside), John Barry's memorable, nagging score, a tone that is a unique combination of pulpy and gothic and the what-a-trip climax have led it to achieve what Rosebrook calls "a nice status" and to become what Nelson terms "a quasi-cult film."

"I'm very pleased that I was attached to it," says Rosebrook.

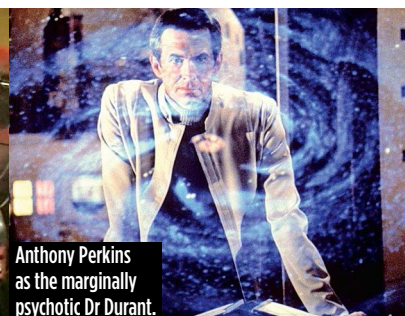
Is Nelson also proud to have it on his CV?

"Yes and no. I'm proud to have it on it because it was a two-year effort. Okay, it might not have been the greatest movie in

the world, but to be able to be on a project for that long and to be basically pleased with the end result is reward enough." An answer that rather sums up the ambivalence that has long been provoked by *The Black Hole's* extraordinary mix of the sublime and the ridiculous. ●



Pretty cool imagery...
or top prizes on 3-2-1.



Anthony Perkins
as the marginally
psychotic Dr Durant.

REX (1)



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FANTASTIC FOUR

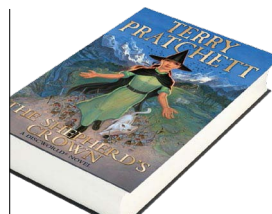
→ Time to conduct an autopsy on Josh Trank's mess of a Marvel movie...



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→ Tiffany Aching returns in the final Discworld novel.

→ RATINGS EXPLAINED ★★★★★ SUPERB ★★★★★ GOOD ★★★★★ AVERAGE ★★★★★ POOR ★★★★★ TERRIBLE

CINEMA

FANTASTIC FOUR

Grim, not Grimm



► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

12A | 100 minutes

► Director **Josh Trank**

► Cast **Miles Teller, Kate Mara, Michael B Jordan, Jamie Bell, Toby Kebbell**

❖ **The Fantastic Four of the** comics once discovered a hellish domain of anti-matter they christened the Negative Zone.

It's a realm the makers of *Fantastic Four* may feel quite at home in. This monumentally misjudged reboot of Fox's flailing franchise has been infested with negativity from day one. Provocative casting choices. Rumours of frantic rewrites and reshoots. Rumbblings of on-set discord and dickishness. The internet, naturally, scented blood. This spiral of poisonous buzz culminated in director Josh Trank disavowing the film in the very week of release – Hollywood's first career suicide note in tweet form.

Now it's here, dead on arrival. And not just dead but a monstrous cinematic corpse, the beached cadaver of a franchise, rotting in public as rubberneckers stand and gawp. It's officially a trainwreck. A bona fide debacle. Even a

post-mortem feels like an act of cruelty at this point.

Pass us the scalpel.

For all its fundamental misunderstanding of the source material, this is a film that clearly began with solid intentions. Trank talked up a "body horror" take on Marvel's founding family, favouring the grotesque and monstrous over bubblegum joy and blue spandex. And that's not such an off-beam choice: *Fantastic Four* #1 may have ignited the Marvel Age of superheroes but it was rooted in the company's staple product at that time – monster comics and bleak, twist-in-the-tale sci-fi shockers.

Trank's also chasing early Spielberg. The opening is pure Amblin: boy genius Reed Richards conducts teleportation experiments in a suburban garage littered with low-tech gizmology. There's a winning touch of *Explorers* here and it gives the early part of the film an easy, bashful charm.

And then the movie blows the origin story, screws up the sacred text, and all is lost. Yes, it makes sense to tweak the details, updating the original Mercury



Michael B Jordan suits up to take the heat.



And the day had started off with bright sunshine.

7-era spaceflight for a transdimensional jaunt. But now the fateful trip plays like a drunken frat boy bet. Criminally, Sue Storm isn't even part of the mission that bestows the quartet's superpowers – she appears to earn them via cosmic cooties when the guys return. It's staggering that this take is less progressive than her 1961 incarnation.

Trank then delivers a tonally jarring swerve into Cronenberg territory. We see Johnny's body flaming on and it looks like a barbecued corpse. Reed slithers through a crawlspace like *The*

“A post-mortem feels like an act of cruelty at this point”

X-Files' Eugene Tooms. Brick-bound Ben cries, "Please help me!" like a soul lost in the ninth circle of hell (or the second reel of this film, which may be worse). We're trapped in gloom and grime and



shadows. It feels like some dank nightmare. You want to wake from it and read comics.

Now this wannabe blockbuster plummets like a burning jet in freefall. A title card declares "One Year Later", robbing the characters of the immediate aftermath of their life-changing event. But the film doesn't care about its placeholder protagonists. There's no byplay, no crackle between the foursome. Ben Grimm is all mope and none of the traditional gruff, blue-eyed charm that makes the character sing on the page. Operatic despot Doctor

Doom is reimagined as a brooding, metal-faced nerd.

If a talented cast is wasted then Josh Trank's deficiencies as a director are cruelly exposed. You wonder how much the found-footage conceit in *Chronicle* disguised his essentially pedestrian style. This is flat, tepid stuff, filled with crude effects – the CGI Thing is decent but the Human Torch is heinous. Trank takes us to another universe and it looks like Monument Valley through an Instagram filter. Planet Zero? Planet Zero Imagination.

It all builds to a numbingly

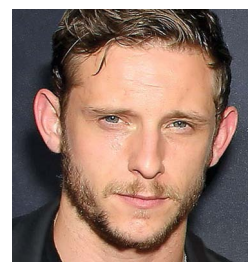
generic showdown that has the stench of last-minute reshoots and big studio flop sweat. It's a fittingly tedious climax to a film that squanders the imaginative motherlode of one of the most genuinely inventive comic books ever published. Ultimately there's more genius, more joy, in a single page of Stan Lee and Jack Kirby than anything in this dour monument to mediocrity. It's like a third-rate grunge band covering *Sgt. Pepper*. **Nick Setchfield**

i A brutally cut subplot involved Reed building a flying car, precursor of the FantastiCar in the comics.



JAMIE BELL

The Thing in
Fantastic Four



Were you a comics fan as a kid?

→ Not particularly. I never really enjoyed reading panels, but comic book characters, and the mythology around them, was very important to me. I grew up with Batman. Those Tim Burton movies were everything to me. Even, to some degree, the Joel Schumacher movies...

Did you see the original *Fantastic Four* movies at the cinema?

→ I did. They get a bad rep, but they're not bad films. Comic book movies were just not what they are now. They weren't as sophisticated, they weren't as bold with their storytelling, and they weren't as real.

What was the toughest part about the part?

→ Working on stilts wasn't easy, they gave me a lot of limitations. To be honest though, the hardest thing was probably playing baseball. Being an Englishman, I *obviously* don't play baseball... you can't just pick up a bat and look like a baseball player. Miles Teller actually threw a ball in my face. He grew up playing baseball and he launched this curveball right at my head three days before we started shooting. They had to use a lot of make-up for a while. I told him we should play some football – see how *that* goes...

Paul Bradshaw

CINEMA



HITMAN: AGENT 47

Off target



► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

15 | 96 minutes

Director Aleksander Bach

Cast Rupert Friend, Hannah Ware, Zachary Quinto, Ciarán Hinds, Thomas Kretschmann, Angelababy

► **The double-edged sword** inherent in all videogame-derived movies – the more faithful you are to the game, the more nonsensical the film becomes – pretty much eviscerates *Hitman: Agent 47* and leaves it bleeding to death on the floor almost before the opening credits are even over.

This reboot trades in the barely-remembered 2007 film's bald Timothy Olyphant for a buzzcut Rupert Friend. As the titular clone assassin, he's tasked with hunting down the nefarious Dr Litvenko (Ciarán Hands), a mad doctor credited with creating

bald weirdo killers just like the one who's chasing him. But of course he has to find the doctor's beautiful (and confused) daughter (Hannah Ware) first, since she holds the key to... well, who knows, really.

Debut director Aleksander Bach is so concerned with giving the audience whiplash that we never really understand exactly what's going on. True to its game origins, *Agent 47* eschews plot narrative for non-stop bloody mayhem, aping not only the gimmicky kills of its source material but also the cinematic blood-ballets of '80s-era John Woo films. If you're in it for a cohesive story, forget it, but it's fine if all you're after is the ol' ultraviolence.

Ken McIntyre

i Friend says clipping 47's hair rather than shaving it right down to the skin felt more practical and "less high-maintenance".

THE MESSENGER

Pawn Of The Dead



► **RELEASED 25 SEPTEMBER**

15 | 101 minutes

► Director David Blair

► Cast Robert Sheehan, Jack Fox, Lily Cole, Tamzin Merchant

► **Jack (Robert Sheehan) sees** dead people. But there's no Bruce Willis around to help him cope with the ghosts nagging him to pass messages to their loved ones, or with the grieving families who don't want to hear what he's got to say. Sick of the undead pestering him and the living slamming their

“It's hard to imagine who the audience might be”

doors in his face, Jack just wants it all to go away. But then a famous journalist is killed in mysterious circumstances, and he won't rest in peace unless Jack helps him to find the truth...

The Messenger is a decidedly British take on the supernatural – and not in a cosy *Harry Potter* kind of a way, either. Everything's grey and dismal even before the ghouls show up; director David Blair has a real knack for depressing imagery, continually framing Jack against a huge, empty, sludge-coloured sky as a visual reminder of the hopelessness of his quest. Thing is, that doesn't make the film much fun to watch.

As always, Sheehan turns in a committed performance, but there's not enough story to go around – especially once the murder mystery takes a back seat to Jack's mental health issues. This

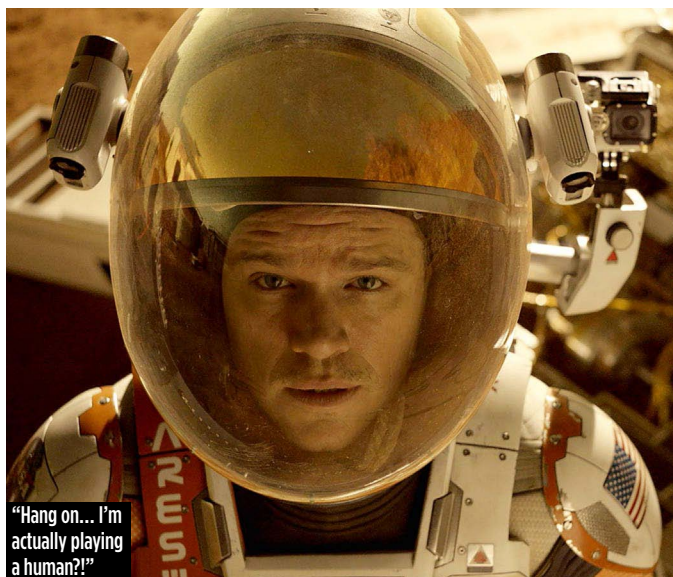


isn't the first horror to suggest a link between mental illness and the supernatural, and it's handled sensitively enough, but if the ghosts aren't real, what's the point? Plus it seems a shame to cast Joely Richardson and then give her so little to work with. It barely seems worth her trouble to show up for the meagre five minutes she's actually on screen.

The tone is the biggest problem, though. It's unrelentingly bleak, yet never musters any actual scares, which makes it hard to imagine who the intended audience might be. Fancy a right misery-fest? This one's for you.

Sarah Dobbs

i A DVD is following swiftly on the heels of the theatrical release – you'll be able to buy it from 19 October.



THE MARTIAN

Left-for-dead Planet

★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED 30 SEPTEMBER**
TBC | TBC minutes

▶ Director Ridley Scott
▶ Cast Matt Damon, Jessica Chastain, Jeff Daniels, Chiwetel Ejiofor

◆ **Andy Weir's compelling**, scrupulously-researched novel *The Martian* quickly went from self-published online sensation to bestseller, and was just as rapidly snapped up by Twentieth Century Fox. The result is a faithful, fantastic adaptation that will exhilarate fans of the book and delight anyone who enjoys their fiction with generous dollops of science.

But in this story of astronaut/botanist Mark Watney (Matt Damon), thought dead by his crewmates and left behind on Mars, watching the characters figure out astronomical problems – literally and figuratively – is only part of the pleasure. For in Watney, Weir and scriptwriter Drew Goddard have created a quick-witted and smart-mouthed character to spend time with, one who will have you rooting for him as he tries to survive the Red Planet's unforgiving ways. After

Prometheus's overwrought spectacle, Ridley Scott clearly relishes getting back to basics, and cleverly manages to keep the story moving even with just one person on screen. But it isn't simply about Damon: back at NASA HQ, the likes of Jeff Daniels, Chiwetel Ejiofor and Sean Bean bring the bureaucratic world of space travel to effervescent life, arguing over policy and figuring out ways to help their seemingly doomed colleague. Then there's Jessica Chastain's Commander Lewis and Watney's other comrades on their ship the *Hermes*, ready to go the extra mile (or million) when they learn the truth.

In lesser hands, the various expositional moments might shrivel the drama, but here they help to boost it, adding extra spice to a story that moves like a rocket when it needs to, but never forgets to stop and consider the human element. Bringing to mind the likes of *The Right Stuff* and *Apollo 13*, this is thrilling adventure fare for the era of the Mars Curiosity rover and beyond. **James White**

i The Mars landscapes are actually Jordan's Wadi Rum Valley, also known locally as The Valley of the Moon.



Christmas morning had been better.

SINISTER 2

The Blum is off the rose

★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

15 | 97 minutes

▶ Director Ciaran Foy
▶ Cast James Ransone, Shannyn Sossamon, Natalie Martinez

◆ **The original *Sinister*** may have relied on cheap conventions of the genre for scares, but it nevertheless offered something of an original take on the found-footage format. Directed by Ciaran Foy rather than Scott Derrickson, and with only James Ransone returning from the original main cast, this follow-up uses similarly by-the-numbers methods to startle its audience, only without the originality factor.

To its credit there is at least an attempt to offer a new angle on the original's premise: again there's a family living in a haunted house, and again there are mysterious snuff films found in the attic. This time, though, it's the kids in the family (Robert Daniel Sloan, Dartanian Sloan) rather than the parent (Shannyn Sossamon) who become obsessed by watching them, allowing the film to flirt with themes of the trauma suffered by children exposed to disturbing content. But nothing much is made of these ideas; instead, we're treated to the same recycled content from the previous film. The demon and the creepy kids are more naff than scary, and the only really sinister thing about this film is the cynicism of Blumhouse Productions in unashamedly cashing in.

Stephen Puddicombe

i Twitter helped Ciaran Foy get the gig: after Scott Derrickson tweeted praise for Foy's *Citadel*, the two got talking.



Everyone's in bed this month!

A HAUNTING IN CAWDOR

★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED 9 OCTOBER**

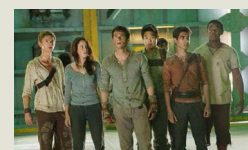
TBC | 101 minutes

◆ **At an isolated probation camp**, juvenile offenders are made to put on a production of cursed play *Macbeth* in a spooky theatre. What could possibly go wrong?

As a disturbed young woman who becomes obsessed by some apparently paranormal activity on the stage, protagonist Vivian (Shelby Young) has shades of Natalie Portman in *Black Swan*, but is comparatively underwritten and fails to convince as a trauma victim.

Stephen Puddicombe

ALSO+OUT



Magazine deadlines are a cruel, unforgiving master. We can't give you a verdict on some of the September releases just yet, as there were no press screenings before our deadline. **THE MAZE RUNNER: SCORCH TRIALS** is now in cinemas. So is **SOLACE**, in which Anthony Hopkins plays a psychic helping to hunt down a serial killer. Also getting a limited theatrical release: British near-future noir **NARCOPOLIS** (25 September) and kids' film **GHOSTHUNTERS** (2 October); however, both are coming out on DVD around the same time, so we'll have reviews for that format next issue.

MAD MAX: FURY ROAD

All Miller, no filler

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED 5 OCTOBER**

2015 | 15 | Blu-ray/DVD

▶ Director **George Miller**

▶ Cast **Tom Hardy, Charlize Theron, Nicholas Hoult, Hugh Keays-Byrne**

George Miller's fourth *Mad Max* film is an unstoppable, gas-guzzling, bone-splintering, flame-throwing, scar-pitted, dust-encrusted juggernaut of a movie. Watching it is like being jostled in a moshpit as strobes dice the universe into razor-sharp slithers. It's precision-tooled chaos, with every grain of dirt tossed up by a tyre feeling like its trajectory to your eyeball has been carefully targeted.

Basically a desert-bound demolition derby, it unfolds across vistas resembling the plains of Mars, or – as vehicles roar into a sandstorm – the fires of hell. When bad guy Immortan Joe learns that one-armed warrior Furiosa (Charlize Theron) has liberated his harem of “breeders”, he sends his annihilation-embracing cannon-fodder in pursuit of her War Rig. Thankfully, as is traditional in this franchise, they don't concentrate on blowing up the tyres, otherwise

this'd be a ten-minute short.

Tangled up in events, Max has no choice but to help as they set off for the sanctuary of the Green Place, ruled by the many mothers, where presumably Caroline Lucas is MP.

A feminist action movie? Subtract Theron's character and it might not look like it; one suspects if Miller had managed to make *Fury Road* at the first (not the third) attempt it might've come out as a straightforward tale of beefcake machismo saving damsels in distress – plus, when Max first claps eyes on the Five Wives, these statuesque beauties are drenching themselves in the manner of an *FHM* reader's wet t-shirt fantasy. But any movie that daubs the words “WE ARE NOT THINGS” on a wall – a decent four-word encapsulation of the entire feminist project – surely has its heart in the right place.

It's a film with a quirky sense of humour too, best embodied in the axe-shredding Doof Warrior (see interview, right), the Immortan's metalhead answer to a battlefield piper. It's telling that a character who doesn't utter a word is one of the standouts, though, because what *Fury Road* is conspicuously

The longer your hair, the further back you have to sit.

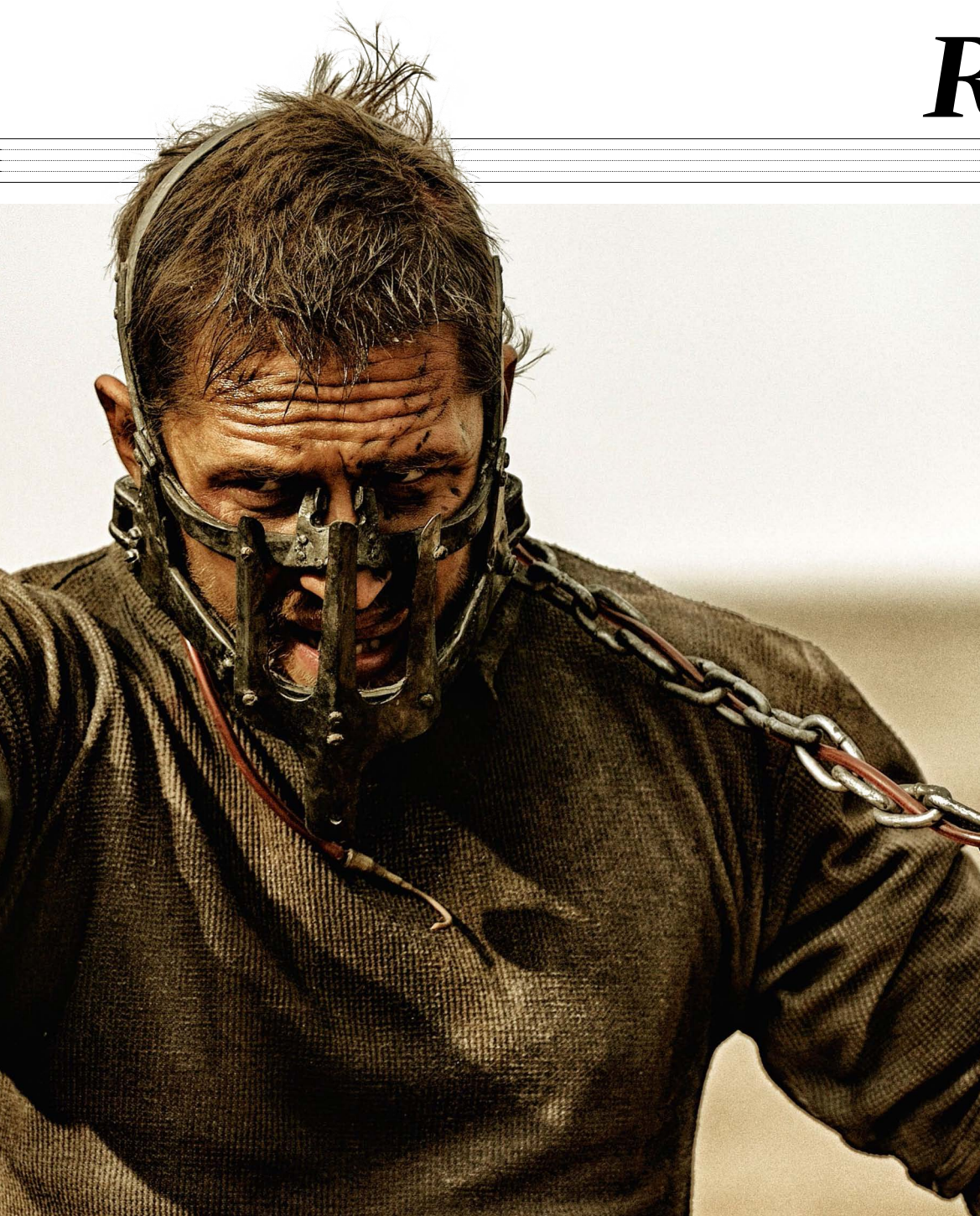


lacking is quotable dialogue. Max Rockatansky was never loquacious, but here he's so monosyllabic as to be nearly mute, with Tom Hardy often reduced to pointing and growling. So even though 80% of Theron's job is hard staring, Max does feel rather over-shadowed – not that it matters. This would probably be just as good a film if he'd been excised entirely.

There's a slightly frustrating sense of a fascinating universe just off the edge of frame, waiting to be explored. In the rare moments when Miller takes the foot off the gas, a question bubbles to the

“Vehicular violence on a scale so vast it's jaw-dropping”

surface: “Who the hell are these people?” In the midst of all the motorised mayhem there's no time for explanations. You can piece things together from what few fragments are flung in our face, but



IOTA

The Doof Warrior in
Max Max: Fury Road



How did you audition?

→ My brief was I just had to play the guitar. They wanted somebody that looked like somewhere between a scarecrow and Keith Richards, so I had a look at Keith and watched him do his stuff. Then I put on the best *Mad Max* outfit I could come up with – big feathers, a black leather pilot cap, lots of belts and chains – did some brown teeth and black eye make-up, jumped in a cab, took my little battery-powered amplifier and blasted them!

What was filming like?

→ I was there for the full six months, because they didn't know when they wanted to put him in and how much. There was an amplifier underneath me, under a grill. They had it pumped really loud, and I just played along, basically freestyling all the time. It wasn't a terribly good guitar – it spent six months in the desert from searing heat to freezing cold, which is never good for a piece of wood! But you could definitely make sound and feel like you were part of the film. After six hours the sun would go down and it got bitterly cold. But being such a *Mad Max* fan I was so happy. I was screaming my head off, tearing through the desert having an absolute ball!

Ian Berriman

perhaps the film would have benefited from a bit less action and a little more backstory. George Miller has created a richly detailed world here, and it's a shame to have to head to the tie-in comics to get a clear view of it. Having said that, when he previously concentrated more on world-building the result was *Beyond Thunderdome*...

It's probably wise, then, that *Fury Road* sticks what to this franchise does best: vehicular violence, this time on a scale so vast it's jaw-dropping. It's top gear alright – in the sense of an amphetamine rush so pure and

intense it's liable to make you chew half of your face off.

➤ **Extras** No commentary, and no sign of George Miller's alternative black and white cut. The DVD just has three deleted scenes, none particularly revelatory: one's a quiet moment between Max and Furiosa; one sees a mother offering her baby up to be a War Boy; one reveals what happened to the old woman who helped the Brides escape.

The Blu-ray adds more. Featurette "Maximum Fury" (29 minutes) discusses how the stunts were achieved, and includes plenty

of footage of the "gags" being tested. There's some great material of the War Rig crashing, shot both from inside the cab, and observing Miller as he momentarily panics that the stunt driver has snuffed it! A further four featurettes (59 minutes) discuss the vehicles, the characters of Max and Furiosa, the details of the production design, and the Wives. A four-minute montage of behind-the-scenes video and raw footage rounds things off. **Ian Berriman**

i The front of Max's muzzle is the head of a garden fork, while Furiosa's accelerator pedal is a shoe-shop foot-measurer.

The Hulk/Iron Man slash-fic made everyone uncomfortable.



AVENGERS: AGE OF ULTRON

The worst form of defence

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

2015 | 12 | Blu-ray 3D/Blu-ray/DVD

▶ Director Joss Whedon

▶ Cast Robert Downey Jr, Mark Ruffalo, Scarlett Johansson, Chris Hemsworth, Chris Evans, Jeremy Renner

❖ **"I look at this movie as a series of compromises and failures,"** explains Joss Whedon in his *Age of Ultron* commentary, which is the kind of thing you'd expect a writer/director to say if their film had bellyflopped at the box office and been savaged by the critics. His *Avengers* follow-up did neither, which makes Whedon's self-criticism seem rather harsh. But there are lots of things here that he's (rightly) proud of too, including one moment he

describes as "the most beautiful scene I've ever filmed". A slow-motion fight in the film's final battle that looks as though it was lifted straight from a comic-book panel by Bryan Hitch, it's possibly the most evocative, technicoloured, purely joyful moment there's been in a superhero movie in years.

Making a decent sequel to *The Avengers* was always going to be a Herculean task, and while Whedon is well aware of those aforementioned failures – some of which are easy to spot yourself, such as the reams of exposition or Thor's peculiar "caving" subplot – the good far outweighs the bad. Any filmmaker would have their work cut out juggling ten-plus main characters, let alone epic

road chases and street fights in locations ranging from South Korea to Johannesburg – and that's without the pressure from Marvel to ensure the film ties in with the other releases they've got in the works. A lesser director might, understandably, have buckled (see: Josh Trank), but Whedon's achieved a funny, pacey, energetic spectacular that can stand proud amidst its brethren. There's also the bonus that James Spader's vocals as bad guy Ultron sound just like William Shatner... or is that just us?

❖ **Extras** Those looking for juicy deleted or extended scenes have six to choose from on the Blu-ray; Thor earns the lion's share, as his cave sequence is included in full – though we're still not quite sure what it's all about, and it seems to belong in a different film entirely. There's no sign of the rumoured

extra scenes involving Loki, sadly, so Hiddleston fans may feel deprived. Still, the gag reel isn't bad and the three featurettes (30 minutes) are interesting, particularly if you've lost track of all those Infinity Stones and would like a recap.

But, as is always the case, Whedon's commentary is where the real fun lies, as in hushed tones he details his filmmaking decisions in painstaking and comical detail. Whether Whedon is chuckling over his wicked plot to convince the audience a certain character was going to die, describing Elizabeth Olsen's snot (!), or pointing out an *Angel* reference nobody would've spotted if he hadn't spilled the beans, this is unmissably entertaining. **Jayne Nelson**

i Paul Bettany had water pipes sewn into his Vision suit to keep him cool. "It's a little like being inside a gin and tonic."



1978, and the lights went out again.

INFINI

Aliens-ish Aussie action

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

2015 | 15 | DVD

▶ Director Shane Abbess

▶ Cast Daniel MacPherson, Grace Huang, Luke Hemsworth, Bren Foster, Luke Ford

⚡ **The best low-budget sci-fi** movies use their limitations to their advantage. Unfortunately, this Aussie deep space thriller desperately wants to be *Aliens*, but its threadbare attempts to be so just keep reminding you how cheap and derivative it all is.

Grunts whose dialogue is 95% “F**k!”, “Pussy!” and “Grun!” teleport to a remote mining outpost, where a protean organism infects them and makes them grunt all the more and kill each other. There’s lots of goo, lots of running down corridors and a “poignant” ending that may make you heave.

It’s noisy, overwrought, one-note and ultimately very dull – though there are some moments of stylish horror and the actors give it their all. The direction is competent, the sets are serviceable and the effects – both physical and CG – are decent enough on a TV movie level. But nothing stands out. Nothing sparks.

Somewhere beneath the unremitting grim is a half-decent sci-fi idea, but it’s lost in the cacophony of grunting. The alien organisms’ MO may have made sense in the writer/director’s mind but it’s muddled on screen.

⚡ **Extras** Trailer. **Dave Golder**

Abbess was once attached to *Source Code* and a *Dark Crystal* sequel, but quit both due to “creative differences”.



“What, you want us to come up with a caption for you?”

THE WALKING DEAD Season Five

Home sweet home?

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED 28 SEPTEMBER**

2015 | 18 | Blu-ray/DVD

▶ Showrunner Scott Gimple

▶ Cast Andrew Lincoln, Melissa McBride, Norman Reedus, Lauren Cohan

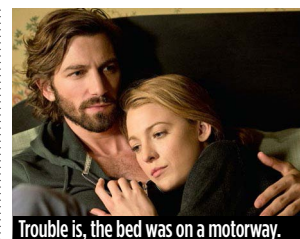
⚡ **Walking Dead’s fifth year** features the biggest shake-up in the show’s status quo (er, *after* the zombie apocalypse, natch). After so long on the road, Rick and the gang finally find a home. Alexandria is a more substantial location than the prison, and it changes the look and feel of the show, moving it out of the woods and into weird suburbia.

Before that, however, there are two arcs and a slew of at-this-point-expected character deaths. The cannibal arc is a hardcore start to the season, with violence begetting more violence. Forget *Game Of Thrones’* Red Wedding – this is hardcore. The mid-season search for Carol is less effective. Heading back to the city is exciting, but the cops they meet there are a thoroughly dull bunch.

Still, the move to Alexandria brings Melissa McBride to the fore in an intriguing new way. Rick and Carol’s killer instincts threaten their new sanctuary more than any amount of Walkers...

⚡ **Extras** Seven commentaries across six episodes (“No Sanctuary” gets two, including a decent Scott Gimple and Gale Anne Hurd track). Six deleted scenes add little, though there’s a bit more Gabriel. Both “Inside The Walking Dead” and “Making The Walking Dead” are collections of episodic featurettes; there are highlights – the test footage of the falling van is interesting – but you’re unlikely to find anything revelatory here. More fun are the two “A Day In The Life...” features for Michael Kudlitz (Abraham) and Josh McDermitt (Eugene). You also get four “character journey” pieces and three short featurettes – two on Walkers and one on making Alexandria. **Will Salmon**

Buy the box set from Amazon and you get an exclusive extra disc, featuring a 24-minute interview with Greg Nicotero.



Trouble is, the bed was on a motorway.

THE AGE OF ADALINE

Blake’s 29

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

2015 | 12 | Blu-ray/DVD

▶ Director Lee Toland Krieger

▶ Cast Blake Lively, Michiel Huisman, Harrison Ford, Ellen Burstyn

⚡ **What would life be like** if you never got old? That’s the question posed by rom dram *The Age Of Adaline*, in which 29-year-old Adaline (Blake Lively) is struck by lightning in 1937 and stops ageing.

It’s an attractive set-up but one that’s under-explored. People occasionally come up to Adaline and exclaim, “Why, you haven’t changed a bit!”, she outlives several pets and she gets awfully good at Trivial Pursuit, but both her character and the chronicling of changing times are curiously muted.

Drama or suspense aren’t the film’s thing, it’s more of a ruminative romance – if it was a song it’d be in a minor key – and a voiceover sometimes feels incongruous. It gets better, as films are wont to do, when Harrison Ford turns up, playing someone from Adaline’s past, and the visuals are rarely less than luxurious. But you’re left wanting more.

⚡ **Extras** Audio commentary by the director; three featurettes (totalling about an hour) on matters such as the different period costumes and the YouTube impressions of Anthony Ingruber (who plays the young version of Harrison Ford’s character); two deleted scenes. **Russell Lewin**

Writer J Mills Goodloe’s initial inspiration was 2001’s *Amélie* – he wanted to create a story with a similar female protagonist.

OUTLANDER Season One

Highland fling

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED 28 SEPTEMBER**

2014-2015 | 18 | Blu-ray/DVD

▶ Showrunner Ronald D Moore

▶ Cast Catriona Balfe, Sam Heughan, Tobias Menzies, Graham McTavish

❖ In some ways it feels strange to be writing about *Outlander* on the pages of *SFX*, because the show's single fantastical element is a footnote – a chrononautical plot device that's pretty much forgotten after the first episode. But boy are we glad we do get to write about *Outlander*, because it's absolutely brilliant.

Time travel is a catalyst but little more as WW2 nurse Claire Randall (Catriona Balfe) finds herself flung back in time to 18th century Scotland during a trip to Inverness with loving husband Frank (Tobias Menzies). Claire

uses her wits and future know-how to keep her head when she's taken in by Clan MacKenzie, where she catches the eye of highland heartthrob Jamie Fraser (Sam Heughan). Clan politics, sadistic redcoat "Black Jack" Randall (Menzies pulling double duties as his own ancestor) and Claire's marriage to a man who won't be born for 200 years complicate the burgeoning romance between would-be lovers.

With the exception of last year's *Helix*, Ronald D Moore has been absent from our screens since *Battlestar Galactica*, but this exquisite adaptation of Diana Gabaldon's much-loved series of novels sees the showrunner back at the height of his powers. It's enchanting from its opening moments, beautifully shot on location in Scotland, with an

evocative, traditional score from BSG's Bear McCreary. There's an unflinching focus on character over the current trend for rapid-fire plot developments. Claire and Jamie's relationship is at the heart of the show and you feel every moment of the touchingly told will-they-won't-they love affair.

It also dares to go to some unrelentingly tough places. Jamie gets whipped in stomach-churning fashion early on, and there's an episode-long sexual assault that is genuinely upsetting to watch. That absolutely shouldn't put you off, as it's one of the most powerful 50 minutes of telly you'll see all year; we only mention it to warn you that it's not for the faint-hearted.

Balfe is superb as Claire, who is smart but blindly stubborn, which

“There’s an unflinching focus on character”

causes as many problems as it solves. Heughan, meanwhile, couldn't be better suited to the role of Jamie – sweet, sincere and fiercely dedicated to the woman he loves. The methodical pacing of their slow-burn relationship won't be to everyone's tastes, but you won't find a better couple on TV.

➤ **Extras** The standard DVD comes with podcast commentaries on all 16 episodes and three featurettes. The standard Blu-ray and Collector's Edition DVD adds 35 deleted scenes (with Ron Moore intro), an extended version of "The Reckoning", seven further featurettes and a gag reel. Buy the Collector's Edition on either format and you also get five collectable art cards and a 64-page photo book, all housed in a lavish gold foil slipcase. **Jordan Farley**

i Gabaldon named Jamie Fraser after '60s *Who* companion Jamie after seeing "The War Games" and finding his kilt "fetching".



Mr Bronson hated new neighbour Paul.

THE DARK SIDE OF THE SUN

Greek tragedy

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

1983 | 15 | DVD

▶ Director David Askey

▶ Cast Peter Egan, Emily Richard, Patrick Mower, Christopher Scoular

❖ In the '70s and '80s, screenwriter Michael J Bird penned four BBC serials – starting with *The Lotus Eaters* – that could be loosely tagged "Greek gothic". *The Dark Side Of The Sun* is the last of them – a low-key conspiracy tale set on Rhodes.

Don Tierney (Patrick Mower) is a photojournalist who moves out to the island with his wife Anne (Emily Richard). It's not long, however, before he stumbles upon a shadowy organisation with apparent links to the Knights Templar – and comes to a sticky end. It's down to Anne to figure out the truth of what happened, while also dealing with visitations from his ghost. Is she mad? Is Don's spectre trying to tell her something? Or are there more sinister forces at work? (Clue: it's not the first option.)

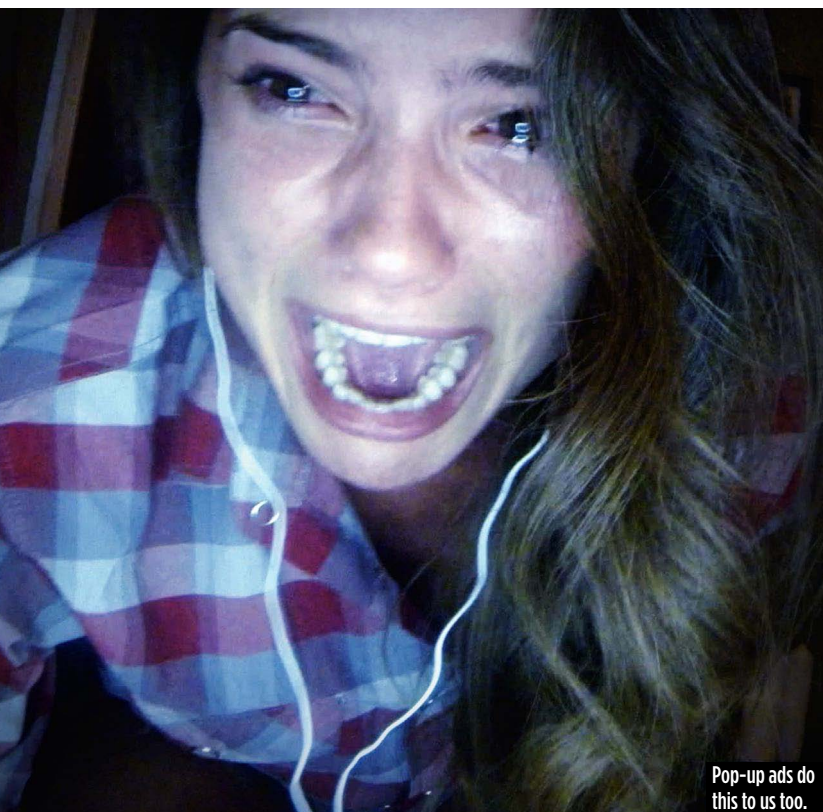
Supernatural elements were largely just hinted at in Bird's previous work, but this is more satisfying for embracing them from the start. The serial does a good job of conjuring up a bucolic but peculiar atmosphere with its grainy, sun-dazed location footage. At six episodes it's a slow burner, for sure, but one that's worth immersing yourself in.

➤ **Extras** None. **Will Salmon**

i Also just released: *Maelstrom*, a 1985 thriller series by the same writer. This one's set in Norway.



Amazing the threads you can pick up in your local charity shop...



Pop-up ads do this to us too.

UNFRIENDED Instagram Karma

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

2015 | 15 | Blu-ray/DVD/Download

► Director Leo Gabriadze

► Cast Shelley Hennig, Moses Storm, Renee Olstead, Will Peltz

🔗 **This found-footage horror** provides rare evidence that this penny-pinching subgenre isn't totally creatively bankrupt just yet.

It goes nowhere near any woods or abandoned mental hospitals. It tackles some zeitgeisty themes. And the way it's put together is really rather clever: events unfold on the screen of protagonist Blaire's laptop as she converses with friends via Skype and instant messaging, all the while dipping into social media, videos and forums. When a mysterious ID-less Skype user silently joins in, they assume it's some hacker creep. Then Blaire starts getting

Facebook messages from a friend who committed suicide after a YouTube shaming...

Yes, it's another story of a vengeful spirit. And some of the cinematic grammar is pretty cheesy – who *highlights* key phrases when they're reading a screen? But the film excels at taking everyday technological experiences – the pregnant pause before a friend messages back; a Skype call glitching – and imbuing them with tension or menace. Like the best found-footage films, *Unfriended* knows that sometimes nothing's more unnerving than the simple process of *waiting*, and tells a story that *benefits* from being told this way. And viewed on a computer, it's even more immersive.

🔗 **Extras** None. **Ian Berriman**

i At one point, Blaire has a tab open on the website for *Teen Wolf* – which actress Shelley Hennig also stars in.



"Trigonometry wasn't a waste of time!"

THE PHOENIX INCIDENT

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

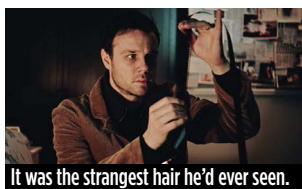
► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

2015 | 15 | DVD/Download

🔗 **Reports of strange lights** over Arizona in 1997 inspired this lightly impressive drama, an investigation into the disappearance of four jockish dudes amid what turns out to be a (low-key) alien invasion.

Though it's difficult to warm to the protagonists, first-time director Keith Arem incorporates a satisfying range of visual sources into his film. It stumbles in its final act, but there's enough here to mark Arem out as one to watch.

🔗 **Extras** None. **Steve O'Brien**



It was the strangest hair he'd ever seen.

THE CANAL

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

2014 | 15 | DVD/Download

🔗 **Part haunted house tale,** part suburban murder drama, *The Canal* sees a man's mind unravel with two unnerving discoveries: his wife's having an affair and their perfect home is a historical crime scene with something decidedly demonic in the walls.

The dread and the jolts are efficiently crafted and the infidelity drama reels you in but this feels overlong in spite of its compact runtime – and an angle regarding the eerie power of early cinematic images is left frustratingly unexplored.

🔗 **Extras** None. **Nick Setchfield**



"Sorry, my tongue just fell off."

CONTRACTED: PHASE 1

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

2013 | 18 | DVD/Download

🔗 **Like *Thanatomorphose* and *Starry Eyes*,** *Contracted* has a female protagonist who slowly rots. What a charming trend.

Sarah catches a zombifying STD from a guy at a party. As she sheds teeth, hair and nails, she accretes biographical details: estranged girlfriend; drug-taking past; a passion for orchids. But after much vomiting blood and numerous soap opera arguments, you're left wondering what the point was.

🔗 **Extras** Making Of; pitch animation; trailer. **Ian Berriman**



It had started off as a game of charades.

CONTAINMENT

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

► **RELEASED 5 OCTOBER**

2015 | 15 | DVD

🔗 **Is it *really* easier to smash** through a wall than a glued-shut door? That's just one nagging question posed by this outbreak thriller, in which a tower block community is quarantined; cue chaos. Only the virus's unspecified nature feels vaguely fantastic.

Former *EastEnders* Lee Ross is convincingly wired as the protagonist and Sheila Reid (Clara's gran in *Who*) refreshingly crotchety as an old crone. But a lack of real surprises means you won't have any problem containing yourself.

🔗 **Extras** TBC. **Calvin Baxter**



DRINKING GAME

Knock back a beverage of your choice every time...

- Someone says "this city".
- Oswald Cobblepot gets angry after being called Penguin.
- James Gordon sternly vows to take down a corrupt official.
- Harvey Bullock puts his hat on, or takes it off.
- Selina suddenly appears out of nowhere.
- Edward Nygma answers one of his own riddles.
- Bruce learns a tough life lesson that takes him one step closer to life as a certain costumed crime-fighter.

GOTHAM

Season One

Dark City

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

2014-2015 | 15 | Blu-ray/DVD/Download

► Creator Bruno Heller

► Cast Ben McKenzie, Donal Logue,

David Mazouz, Sean Pertwee,

Robin Lord Taylor, Jada Pinkett Smith

⚡ **Gotham has a big problem:**

Batman. The Dark Knight's vigilante campaign is a decade or more down the line, but the cape and cowl loom so large over the show that it seems incapable of forging its own identity.

It's not the series' only problem. Ostensibly it's a procedural about Jim Gordon's early years in the GCPD, alongside his street-smart partner Harvey Bullock. And yet it's only interested in the villains. It makes sense: Batman has a great

rogues' gallery, so why not capitalise on that? But far too much prominence is placed on the sub-*Godfather* shtick of the Falcone and Maroni crime families given that it gets dull after one episode, while the liberal sprinkling of nascent supervillains throughout the season (usually accompanied by a wink and nudge as to their future identity) feels desperate since, Penguin aside, none of them get anything to do.

This feeds into another major problem: the crippling bloated cast. The Major Crimes Unit are introduced as key players before going MIA halfway through the season; Barbara only exists to get kidnapped; the writers clearly run out of story for Jada Pinkett Smith's Fish Mooney, leading to a

subplot so dumb it makes the *Saw* movies look like Scorsese; and worst of all David Mazouz's young Bruce Wayne is constantly shoe-horned into stories he has no business being part of purely because he's the future Caped Crusader. A tighter focus on a smaller cast – or even a single villain similar to *Daredevil*'s Wilson Fisk – would likely have yielded far superior results.

There are things to like. It's a handsome show; the production team have done an impressive job bringing Gotham's seedy back alleys to life on a TV budget. Robin Lord Taylor's Penguin is fantastic: awkward, manipulative, complex and strangely sympathetic, he's the show's best character by a mile. And Sean Pertwee's no-nonsense,

former SAS butler-cum-mentor is shaping up to be one of the best Alfreds ever.

There are snatches of storytelling greatness too, such as early episodes "Spirit Of The Goat" and "Penguin's Umbrella", that a generous person might say demonstrate promise for the future, but for the most part this first year is wearisomely average. Next season will see a transition from organised crime into full-on supervillainy. It could be the jump start *Gotham* needs. At present it's not the show Bat-fans deserve.

⚡ **Extras** A case of quantity over quality, with a preview special and five featurettes (95 minutes) which, though fairly lengthy, offer almost zero actual insight. There's also an extended version of the pilot episode (49 minutes), eight deleted scenes, a gag reel, seven character profiles, and the same Comic-Con panel that's on the *Flash* box set. **Jordan Farley**

i Ben McKenzie has also played Batman previously, voicing the Dark Knight in DC's animated adaptation of *Batman: Year One*.



"They're still making *Fantastic Four 2*!"

THE MAN WHO COULD CHEAT DEATH

Gets old real quick

★★★☆☆ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED 21 SEPTEMBER**
1959 | 12 | Blu-ray & DVD (dual format)

▶ Director Terence Fisher
▶ Cast Anton Diffring, Hazel Court, Christopher Lee, Arnold Marle

⚡ **Though shot at the height** of the studio's success and written/directed by the duo behind *Dracula*, this Hammer horror has long languished in obscurity. With good reason: it's dreadfully dull.

The plot mashes together gothic archetypes – principally *Hyde* and *Dorian Gray*, with a little *Frankenstein*. Anton Diffring is 104-year-old Dr Bonnet, who thanks to 10-yearly transplants of stolen parathyroid glands still looks 35, but must swig a potion to fend off derangement now the clock is ticking again.

The film's origins in a play are part of the problem – it's tediously talky and enclosed. Terence Fisher's drably static direction doesn't help. Neither does Diffring's unsuited performance, all dramatic posing and facial twitching.

Crucially, it's not frightening either; when Bonnet "goes Hyde" he just gets eye bags and a mouldy green tinge. And his final, superannuated form brings to mind a boiled sweet that's accumulated pocket lint.

⚡ **Extras** Interviews with horror experts Jonathan Rigby and Kim Newman; a 28-page booklet. **Ian Berriman**

i To create veins on Bonnet's face, make-up man Roy Ashton used strands of blue wool from one of his jumpers.



As Grand Nationals went, it wasn't a thriller.

HARD TO BE A GOD

Medieval madness

★★★☆☆ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

2013 | 18 | Blu-ray/DVD

▶ Director Aleksei German
▶ Cast Leonid Yarmolnik, Gali Abaydulov, Yuriy Ashikhmin

⚡ **A contender for the Filthiest** Movie Ever award (and not in *that* way), this oddball Russian endurance test is a sci-fi tale that largely plays as a nightmarish trip into a medieval hell. The rambling, difficult-to-follow plot tells the story of the distant world Arkarnar, which is similar to Earth but in terms of development lags eight centuries behind.

A team of Earth scientists were sent to the planet to observe a potential Renaissance-like event that never actually happened. Now, one of them poses as a demi-god, simply observing as a purge of intellectuals threatens to

wipe out any potential progress for Arkarnar's society.

This all unfolds during lengthy scenes of grotesque violence and stomach-churning strangeness, all of which take place in a filth-encrusted, rain-soaked world. Directed by Aleksei German, the B&W visuals are incredible, often feeling like a Hieronymus Bosch painting brought to life.

Unfortunately, the film is also a bewildering, near-incomprehensible experience that's like being trapped inside a piece of experimental theatre. Those in the mood for aggressively confrontational arthouse cinema may find *Hard To Be A God* rewarding, but for everyone else its mix of medieval savagery and punishing bleakness will be far, far too much.

⚡ **Extras** The DVD has an intro by the co-writer, trailer and booklet. The Blu-ray adds an interview with the director's son (who finished the film after he died); a short video essay; a rundown of German's directorial career; galleries. **Saxon Bullock**

i The film's based on a novel by Arkady and Boris Strugatsky, who also wrote *Roadside Picnic*, adapted as 1979's *Stalker*.



The dog was traumatised for life.

THE WIZ

Not in Kansas anymore

★★★☆☆ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

1978 | U | Blu-ray

▶ Director Sidney Lumet
▶ Cast Diana Ross, Michael Jackson, Nipsey Russell, Richard Pryor

BLU-RAY DEBUT When you type

"The Wiz" into the likes of IMDb or Amazon, autocomplete will suggest "The Wizard Of Oz" – and you'd be better off heading to the 1939 film than this '70s reinterpretation.

An all-black cast is led by Diana Ross as an even-older-than-Judy Garland Dorothy, whirled off to the land of Oz, here imagined as a discotheque Manhattan with that yellow brick road through it (on this high-def version you can see a split in the middle, presumably where the lino meets). It's true that there are visual treats in this colourful fantasyland – graffiti comes alive, the sun turns into a piece of fruit, orange trash cans gnash their teeth – but, my, the songs are boring; you'd think a movie with Diana Ross and Michael Jackson would manage catchier numbers. The tunes stretch things out painfully; it's a mighty long time before we meet the Wiz himself (Richard Pryor, in a sort of dry run for *Superman 3*).

Director Sidney Lumet, of *12 Angry Men*, *Dog Day Afternoon* and *Network* fame, always was a strange choice for director, and *The Wiz* was his only musical. No wonder.

⚡ **Extras** A 1978 Making Of (13 minutes) and a trailer.

Russell Lewin

i A live TV version of *The Wiz* is set to air in the US on 3 December. The cast includes Queen Latifah and Mary J Blige.

“Lengthy scenes of grotesque violence”



ZARDOZ

Sean of his dignity

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

1974 | 15 | Blu-ray

▶ Director John Boorman

▶ Cast Sean Connery, Charlotte

Rampling, John Alderton, Sara

Kestelman, Niall Buggy

BLU-RAY DEBUT Back in 1974,

Zardoz should have been a big deal. Written and directed by the then hotter-than-the-sun John Boorman and headlining Sean Connery, *Zardoz* should have been *Star Wars* before *Star Wars*. In the end though, critics lacerated Boorman's dystopian vanity project, and it croaked on arrival at the box office.

Set far into the future where the world is ruled over by a group known as the "Eternals", it follows the brawny Zed (Connery), a barrel-chested "Brutal" who manages to penetrate the Eternals'

sanctuary, the Vortex. As a class allegory, *Zardoz* is ludicrously heavy-handed, and its ponderous, lumbering seriousness does it no favours. Whether it's the sight of Connery in a crimson loincloth or Charlotte Rampling giving a stern-faced lecture on erections, it's often involuntarily funny, and only John Alderton, as a preeningly effete Eternal, seems to sync himself with the movie's inherently preposterous set-up.

▶ **Extras** An entertainingly candid director's commentary is carried over from the DVD. New to this release: interviews with Boorman, actor Sara Kestelman and seven crew, and an appreciation by *Kill List* director/*Zardoz* fan Ben Wheatley. Plus: trailer, radio spots, booklet. **Steve O'Brien**

i This wasn't Boorman's first try at SF&F: in 1969/1970 he spent six months working on a *Lord Of The Rings* script.

STAR WARS REBELS

Season One

A Newer Hope

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

2014 | PG | Blu-ray/DVD

▶ Creators Simon Kinberg, Dave Filoni, Carrie Beck

▶ Cast Taylor Gray, Freddie Prinze Jr, Vanessa Marshall, Tiya Sircar

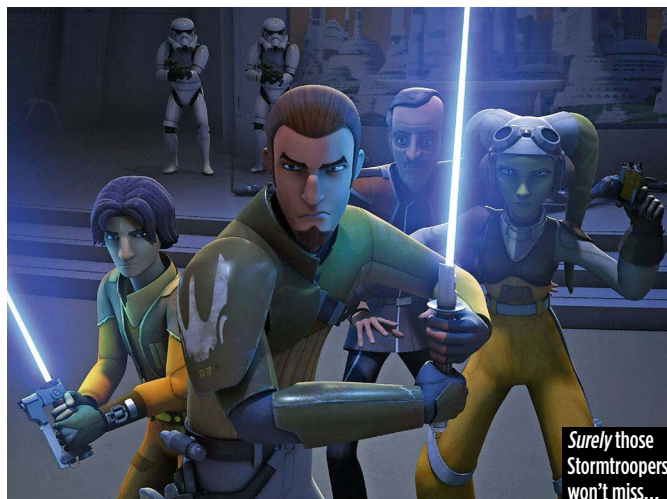
▶ **There were still plenty of** stories left to tell in *The Clone Wars* when Disney decided to wield the lightsaber of cancellation. As entertaining as the previous *Star Wars* TV show was, however, it's difficult to see how Anakin and Obi-Wan's pre-*Empire* exploits would fit into the new Lucasfilm regime. After all, events that took place *before* Darth Vader drew his first mechanical breath now seem more-or-less off the agenda.

Fortunately, *Star Wars Rebels* is a worthy replacement. Set five years before that incident with the Death Star plans, the show flies

closer to the original trilogy than we've been in three decades. It's a time period ripe with potential, with the Empire tightening its grip on the galaxy and all the major

characters from the movies already in play – some even cameo here.

More importantly, *Rebels* riffs on the themes that made the original movies classics. Whereas



The Clone Wars' heroes were Jedi at the height of their powers, the crew of the Ghost are outsiders, vulnerable; the little guys battling an unjust system and taking the fight to the Empire.

It's also pleasingly, authentically *Star Wars*: the music and sound effects are spot on, while the spaceship designs riff off Ralph McQuarrie's original concept art. And rather than being some throwaway cash-in series for kids, *Rebels* charts crucial moments in the history of that galaxy far, far away. Without these guys, there'd be no Rebel Alliance – Luke and Leia probably had posters of them on their walls.

▶ **Extras** The DVD features "Star Wars Rebels: The Ultimate Guide" (20 minutes) and a season two preview, plus all 13 episodes get a brief "Rebel Recon" featurette. Blu-ray buyers also get a four-minute featurette on *Rebels'* trip to *Star Wars* Celebration, and four shorts. **Richard Edwards**

i The look of Lasat crewmember Zeb is based on Ralph McQuarrie's original designs for Chewbacca.



Fred took his love of Dolmio to extremes.

NIGHTMARE CITY

The Running Dead

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

1980 | 18 | Blu-ray & DVD (dual format)

▶ Director Umberto Lenzi

▶ Cast Hugo Stiglitz, Laura Trotter, Maria Rosaria Omaggio

Five minutes into this delirious Italian horror its stall's been set out: there are frantic scenes of bloody carnage and throat-ripping violence at an airport, then we cut to... a Legs & Co-style TV dance troupe. It sums up the film's cheesy mania.

A radioactive leak has turned people into violent – and fast-moving – zombies (well... sort-of zombies: they're not actually dead). We follow the ensuing panic largely through the eyes of a TV journalist. But it's probably best not to focus on what little plot there is, because this film is all about *moments* – mad moments, like a doctor flinging his scalpel into a zombie's eye, or a breast being hacked off. It's a fever dream, helped rather than hindered by dodgy edits and hilariously OTT gore. While some way from being "good" – it's a tad boring at times – it has enough perverse nuttiness to cheer fans of old exploitation flicks.

Extras Fangoria editor Chris Alexander provides commentary. There are new interviews with the director, star Maria Rosaria Omaggio and fan Eli Roth (47 minutes). There's a choice of two transfers; both have their drawbacks, as a short restoration featurette explains. Plus: alternate opening titles; trailer; booklet. **Russell Lewin**

The original script featured "proper" Romero-style zombies. Lenzi rewrote it to make radiation the prime cause.



The Flash: so-called cos his bottom half's naked.

THE FLASH Season One

Need for speed

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

▶ **RELEASED 21 SEPTEMBER**

2014-2015 | 12 | Blu-ray/DVD

▶ Creators Greg Berlanti, Andrew

Kreisberg, Geoff Johns

▶ Cast Grant Gustin, Candice Patton, Danielle Panabaker, Carlos Valdes

It took the creative team behind *The Flash* the best part of a year to find their feet when making sister show *Arrow*. There are no such troubles here – the series hits the ground running and picks up enough speed to obliterate the sound barrier by the end of the season.

After a brief origin story, *The Flash* slips into a comfortable groove as fastest man alive Barry Allen is typically tasked with taking down a superpowered metahuman, learning something about himself along the way. There's also a superb arc plot

involving a mysterious yellow speedster that stretches back to the murder of Barry's mother.

The single best thing about the series is that it remembers comic book adaptations can be fun. This ethos is best embodied by Barry himself, played with infectious exuberance by Grant Gustin. It's also a show with a lot of heart. The scenes Barry shares with his behind-bars dad frequently leave you devastated.

It's set in the same universe as fellow CW show *Arrow*, and though you don't need to be up to speed with that series to enjoy it, the crossover episodes and guest appearances may befuddle if you aren't. Inevitably some villains are less successful than others, and Barry's love interest Iris is blander than a plate of boiled potatoes, but along with *Daredevil* and *Agent Carter*, *The Flash* is the current pinnacle of superhero TV.

Extras Commentary on the pilot, three decent featurettes (61 minutes), deleted scenes, screen test footage, a gag reel, and the 2014 Comic-Con panel. **Jordan Farley**

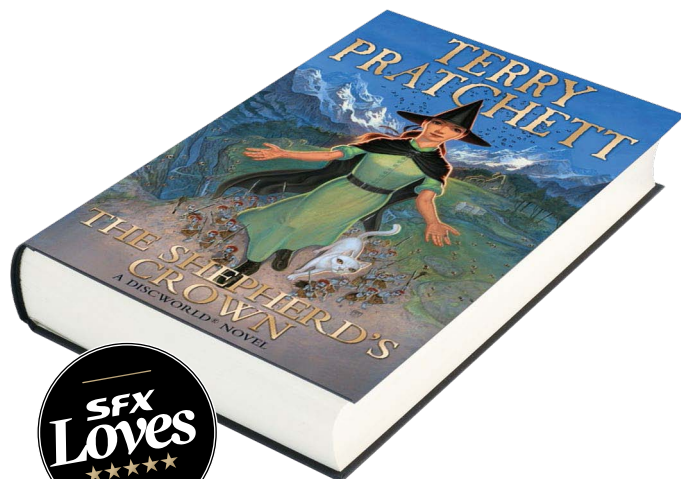
Mark Hamill reprises his role as the Trickster in episode 17, a character he previously played in the 1990 *Flash* TV show.

“The Flash is a show with a lot of heart”

(ROUND UP)



There's just too many damn TV box sets this month, otherwise we'd have gone into detail about **PERSON OF INTEREST SEASON THREE** (21 September, Blu-ray/DVD). There's a few episodes during this run of the deliciously convoluted techno thriller when the show appears to be giving us six season finales in a row. As the good machine discovers its evil twin, Samaritan, it's a gripping battle of the AIs. Under-fives and nostalgic adults will probably get the most out of **MOOMINS ON THE RIVIERA** (28 September, DVD), a big-screen outing for Tove Jansson's hippo-like trolls, in which the Moomin family visit the Cote D'Azur, and come to realise that the values of their life back home are far superior to all its shallow glamour. It's a charmingly sweet tale, whose hand-drawn animation has an appealing simplicity. A crazy-bearded Matthew “Lost” Fox features in **EXTINCTION** (21 September, DVD), a snowbound post-apocalyptic zombie flick whose vicious undead are blind and like to slither about. Unfortunately its emphasis on character fails because the central mystery – why two former friends fell out – just isn't interesting enough to warrant the screentime devoted to it. Finally, in **DEMONIC** (out now, DVD) a detective (Frank Grillo) looks into the deaths of students who held a séance in a house where mass murder took place. The police investigation angle and interweaving of past and present freshen things up a little, but it's overly reliant on the usual jump scares, and the big twist ain't much cop.



THE SHEPHERD'S CROWN

The final Discworld novel

★★★★★

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

344 pages | Hardback/Ebook

► Author **Terry Pratchett**

► Publisher **Doubleday**

❖ **He may have imagined the** venal city of Ankh-Morpork into being, but while he liked the opportunity to stay in a good hotel, Terry Pratchett wasn't an urban soul. Instead, he made his home in the rolling chalk hills of Wiltshire, far from hustle and bustle. It's therefore wholly appropriate that his final Discworld novel should star not Vimes, Commander of the City Watch, or the wizards of Unseen University, but Tiffany Aching, witch of the chalk. She's a recurring character fans have watched grow up since she was nine, when she first happened upon the Nac Mac Feegles in *The Wee Free Men*.

She's grown to be a young woman of considerable talent, both clever enough and sensible enough to have won the respect of Esme Weatherwax, and to be

named as Esme's successor as non-leader of witchery when Death comes a calling. (Witches don't have a leader because they're non-hierarchical, but sometimes it's good to have someone who commands enough respect to make *very strong suggestions* about what needs to be done...)

Tiffany immediately faces a crisis. Esme's passing alerts unfriendly souls, who spot an opportunity to come a visiting. The capricious elves battled by Esme, Nanny Ogg and Magrat Garlick in *Lords And Ladies* are back. But the Discworld has changed. The iron railroad is under construction and elves hate iron, which burns through the glamour they use to bamboozle

“It's a miracle this book exists at all”

humankind. Still, goblins, creatures that have a genius for mechanical engineering, have found a place in this new world; might elves also learn to get along with other races? Or will the witches again need to expel them from the Discworld? And either way, will Tiffany cope with the challenge?

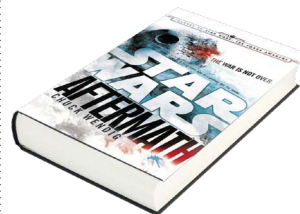
To answer these questions would involve major spoilers, so better perhaps to focus on what Pratchett is doing here, which is to finish a series of books that have effectively acted as a coming-of-age sequence. In doing so, he drops hints as to where the Discworld novels might have gone had things turned out differently. Notably, we're offered the world's first male witch in Geoffrey, a noble's younger son who rebels against his oafish father.

And even as he shows us a young woman finding her place in the world, Pratchett also uses Geoffrey to turn his attention to the other end of life, focusing in on the problems of loneliness and lack of purpose that beset old men. Sheds figure heavily in these passages.

As to whether such themes are explored with the panache the younger Pratchett would have managed, the answer is no. The gags and one-liners are great but there's an episodic quality to the chapters here, as if the book were written as a series of scenes. A well Pratchett would have weaved these scenes, and his different themes and plotlines, together far more subtly. But even saying that seems like petty grumbling, because in so many ways it's a miracle this book exists at all.

Better to focus on the final chapters, which in part concern how influence can extend beyond the grave. Inevitably, these make you think about Pratchett's own legacy, which will surely be to be remembered as not just a humorist to match Wodehouse, but as a satirist and moralist comparable to Dickens or Waugh. His influence, we'd guess, won't decline in the years ahead, but will grow in subtle ways, rolling out from the chalk to the benefit of all of Roundworld. **Jonathan Wright**

i At his death, the ideas Pratchett had for new novels included a YA book starring Maurice as a ship's cat.



STAR WARS: AFTERMATH

Life after Death Star

★★★★☆

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

382 pages | Hardback/Ebook

► Author **Chuck Wendig**

► Publisher **Century**

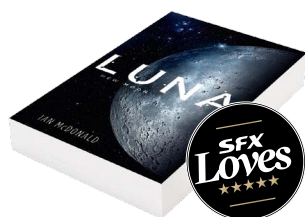
❖ **Aftermath isn't the first** novel published in Lucasfilm's new, integrated *Star Wars* continuity, but – along with Marvel's *Shattered Empire* comic – it is the first story set after *Return Of The Jedi*.

Alas, it doesn't quite live up to the hype. In storytelling terms, author Chuck Wendig does a decent enough job, crafting a fun adventure with a bunch of new protagonists – it's page-turny, feels like *Star Wars*, and any story about Imperial types plotting their next move is going to have a strong hook.

Unfortunately, Wendig's prose isn't up to the mission. The short scenes try too hard to be cinematic, the metaphors are clunky, and nods to the movies – like Admiral Ackbar's fears about being caught in a trap – are a bit too on the nose.

Aftermath's other shortcoming is also, perversely, its biggest strength. The core plot is so overshadowed by “Interludes” teasing what's going on in the wider galaxy that the novel's less a story in its own right than a set up for others. But the clues we get about the next chapters in the lives of some *very* important characters make for intriguing, essential reading – they just don't necessarily belong in this book. **Richard Edwards**

i Out in the US now: YA/junior books *The Weapon Of A Jedi*, *Smuggler's Run*, *Moving Target* and *Lost Stars*.



LUNA: NEW MOON

Moonbase manoeuvring

★★★★★

► **RELEASED 17 SEPTEMBER**

392 pages | Paperback/Ebook

► Author Ian McDonald

► Publisher Gollancz

❖ If there's one word that sums up Ian McDonald's science fiction, it's *intensity*. With novels like *River Of Gods*, *Brasyl* and *The Dervish House*, the Belfast-dwelling author has crafted full-on, dizzying portraits of different cultures and different futures. Now, he's focused these skills into a hard SF novel, depicting a future lunar colony with a fierce mix of compelling drama and rigorous world-building.

This first in a two-part series follows the fortunes of the Corta family, one of the ruling corporate dynasties known as "the Five Dragons", who've maintained financial power on the Moon for decades. An assassination attempt breaks the fragile peace between the Cortas and their rivals, and in an environment as deadly as the Moon, the resulting intrigue soon spirals out of control...

Reading like a wild, multicultural remix of classic science fiction tropes, *Luna: New Moon* is a densely written, hugely compulsive SF drama that fully displays its author's lyrical prose style and whip-smart plotting. Provocative, gripping and bracingly adult, it's a stunning example of how good science fiction can be, and yet more proof that McDonald is one of the best writers currently at work in the genre.

Saxon Bullock

i NCIS: Los Angeles showrunner Shane Brennan is working on a TV version of *Luna: New Moon* for CBS.



SORCERER TO THE CROWN

Magical Regency romp

★★★★★

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

374 pages | Hardback/Ebook

► Author Zen Cho

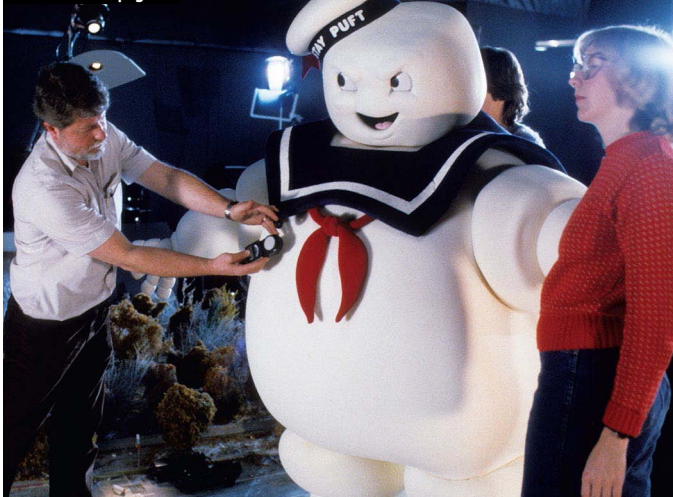
► Publisher Macmillan

❖ With tongue (somewhat) in cheek, Crawford Award winner Zen Cho has described her fiction as "fluff for postcolonial booknerds"; essentially, she writes about race, gender and power through the medium of dragons and pirates. Her utterly delightful debut is steeped in a love of the Regency romances of Georgette Heyer and the school stories of Enid Blyton, but it also interrogates those novels' worlds – a glittering, powerful England built on empire and slavery – by placing front and centre the people they overlooked.

Cho imagines a Regency England in which magic is real, and its use is inextricably bound up in high politics, social hierarchy and fighting Napoleon. Former slave Zacharias Wythe is the new young Sorcerer Royal, beset by rivals who consider him Not English Enough for the post; the magnificently monickered Prunella Gentleman is trapped in a boarding school devoted to teaching girls to suppress their magical talent. Together they might just change the world, but they'll do it with plenty of bickering and silliness and worrying about propriety. A smart, gleefully fun tale that fizzles with energy and engages the brain. **Nic Clarke**

i Cho's story "The House Of Aunts" aims to be a "realistic Twilight". Download an epub at <http://bit.ly/houseaunts>.

Preparing the Stay Puff Man for his rampage.



GHOSTBUSTERS: THE ULTIMATE VISUAL HISTORY

What you gonna read?

★★★★★

► **RELEASED 25 SEPTEMBER**

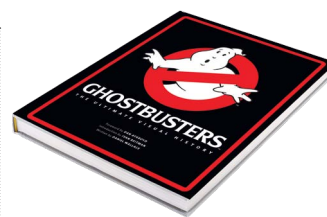
224 pages | Hardback

► Author Daniel Wallace

► Publisher Titan Books

❖ Considering there have only been two *Ghostbusters* movies (so far), the franchise has done a remarkable job of permeating popular culture. This comprehensive history shows how four spook-hunting guys from New York took over the world.

Unsurprisingly, the making of the films fills the majority of the book. The range of talking heads here is impressive, and contributors from director Ivan Reitman and star/creator Dan Aykroyd to ILM visual effects whiz Dennis Muren deliver anecdotes aplenty. They're refreshingly candid – there's acceptance of the sequel's flaws – and revealing enough to make sure even the most diligent of *Ghostbusters* aficionados will learn something new. Even without the



words, however, this would be an essential addition to your (haunted?) library, packed as it is with behind-the-scenes pics and early concept art.

But best of all is the way it goes beyond the movies into the various cartoon spin-offs, comics, videogames and merchandise. For anyone who grew up on *The Real Ghostbusters*, it's particularly nice to see the '80s cartoon recognised as a key part of franchise lore – its portrayal of Slimer even led to a retooling of the original movie's "Onionhead" for *Ghostbusters II*.

Richard Edwards

i The PKE meter prop was made using the shell of an Iona SP-1 – a handheld electric shoe polisher.

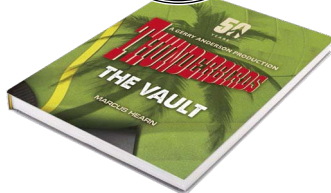
BOOKS



THUNDERBIRDS: THE VAULT

Marionette museum

The Chad Valley Give-A-Show Projector.



★★★★★

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

208 pages | Hardback

► Author Marcus Hearn

► Publisher Virgin Books

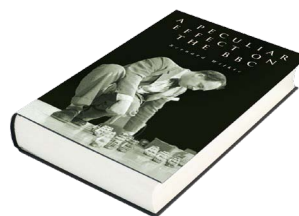
❖ **Perfectly timed for its 50th anniversary**, this “virtual museum” provides a lavishly illustrated overview of the classic puppet show, crammed with visual treats.

Covering everything from Gerry Anderson's inspiration (a dam burst which flooded a German mine in 1963) to the spin-off movies and comics, with sections on such vital contributions as Barry Gray's music and Derek Meddings's model effects, it's comprehensive but concise, expertly mines old interviews with key players – some previously unpublished – for amusing

anecdotes, and doesn't whitewash over behind-the-scenes battles.

But what's really impressive is the care that's gone into curating the illustrations. A photo of a rare collectable or scan of ephemera (press cuttings, letters, business cards) won't be haphazardly dropped in, but placed at a relevant point. A behind-the-scenes shot will be paired with an image showing how the scene looked on TV; when we're told the sets used toothpaste tube caps or a lemon squeezer, screenshots are provided as proof. Anyone who bought the same author's *Doctor Who* or *Hammer Vault* books will be delighted to discover that this is every bit as excellent. **Ian Berriman**

i Gerry Anderson's brother, Lionel, had a walk-on role in a 1943 film released in England as *Thunder Birds*. Coincidence?



A PECULIAR EFFECT ON THE BBC

Miracle-worker's memoir

★★★★★

► **RELEASED 29 SEPTEMBER**

370 pages | Hardback

► Author Bernard Wilkie

► Publisher Miwk Publishing

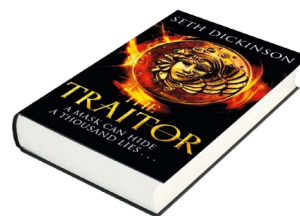
❖ **Co-creator of the BBC** visual effects department, the late Bernard Wilkie is a significant figure in television history. But this self-deprecating memoir (written in the '90s) paints a picture of a man who got his job by fluke, then stumbled through mishap after mishap.

It's no wonder disasters predominate, though – successful effects don't make for a good anecdote, and there are some corkers here. As the Beeb's version of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* aired live in 1954, for example, Wilkie was frantically scrabbling about at Peter Cushing's feet searching for a winding handle.

Wilkie died before the book passed through an editor, and its butterfly-mind organisation is suggestive of sheaves of scribbled notes stuffed into a desk drawer. He also has a tendency to ramble – we probably don't need to know how he passed his driving test. But these digressions do add further character to a book that's brimming with it. And if the results feel a mite ramshackle, well, that's probably appropriate for a man who spent much of his working life bodging things together with glue and gaffer tape.

Ian Berriman

i According to Wilkie, the Room 101 scene in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* featured two gay rats “having it away like knives”.



THE TRAITOR

Intrigue and eugenics

★★★★★

► **RELEASED 24 SEPTEMBER**

399 pages | Hardback/Ebook

► Author Seth Dickinson

► Publisher Tor Books

❖ **A fantasy novel with a** twisty plot denser than a drawing room murder mystery, *The Traitor* attains *A Song Of Ice And Fire* levels of skulduggery, but alas without the accompanying glitz and sensawunder moments.

When the Empire of Masks takes over the island nation of Taranoke, child prodigy Baru Cormorant is recruited into its bureaucratic school. Marked out as worthy of advancement, she plots to inflict revenge on the empire's government from the inside, but can she remain moral doing so?

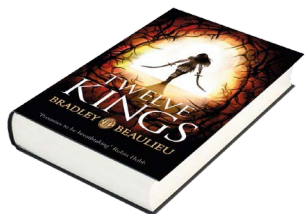
Debut author Seth Dickinson's empire is an original creation, founded on the enthusiastic practice of eugenics, and is deeply homophobic to boot (the driver for Baru's vengeance). Questions of the cost of civilisation are raised, but it's power – its nature, acquisition and exercise – that dominates the narrative.

Unfortunately, the story is unwelcomingly mechanical and Baru does not seem terribly real. She becomes gradually ruthless, but at times seems curiously lacking in determination. Ultimately, most of her actions are driven by the needs of narrative.

Lovers of clever plots will get a kick, those looking for high adventure won't. **Guy Haley**

i Fancy a preview? You can read the first two chapters of *The Traitor* at <http://bit.ly/traitor1> and <http://bit.ly/traitor2>.

Reviews



TWELVE KINGS

Are you not entertained?



► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

592 pages | Hardback/Ebook

► Author **Bradley Beaulieu**

► Publisher **Gollancz**

❖ **A promising start to a new fantasy trilogy, *Twelve Kings* is the story of Çeda, the daughter of a murdered woman on a quest for vengeance against the titular rulers of the desert metropolis of Sharakhai.**

Bradley Beaulieu builds a complex world around the city state – it's just as alive as the characters, a fascinating fantasy realm you'll wish you could visit. Çeda herself is much like the city: fiery and complicated. She's a strong, confident lead and it's a breath of fresh air to not have a female gladiator's skills questioned – no one ever says, "you can't do that because you're a woman".

Additional point of view characters come and go intermittently, introducing ever more strands to the tapestry Beaulieu is weaving. It's a book that straddles the line between compelling and bloated – there's a sense of too much to say, too little space. Some moments feel glossed over, whereas others drag. Flashbacks to Çeda's childhood, however, come as a pleasant break from the main story, adding a little extra flavour to the plot and tantalising new details. The mystery of the Kings and their 400-year-old pact with the desert gods is enough to keep you hooked, and definitely enough to make you want more. **Bridie Roman**

i You can see Bradley Beaulieu's visual inspiration for the series at this Pinterest board: <http://bit.ly/12pin>.



GESTAPO MARS

Nazi piece of work



► **RELEASED 22 SEPTEMBER**

277 pages | Paperback/Ebook

► Author **Victor Gischler**

► Publisher **Titan Books**

❖ **Important info first:**

Gestapo Mars is told from the perspective of a Nazi. As this particular Nazi is portrayed as a womanising bad-ass, like Snake Plissken with a sex drive or Boba Fett with a boner, it's easy to forget his political leanings, but every now and then Victor Gischler chucks in a reminder – a swastika, a heil salute – and it's baffling.

We're all for antiheroes, but it's important to know the difference between Reich and wrong. There isn't anything particularly political about this book – these Nazis have been drafted in for their "cool" iconography, not their disgusting world-views – but it's a bizarre thing to celebrate.

If Gischler had enlisted fictional fascists, the book might be easier to enjoy. It follows an assassin pulled from deep freeze, and his attempts to negotiate life 300 years in the future, while serving his government – who are Nazis, let's not forget that – by killing the daughter of an enemy of the (weary sigh) Galactic Third Reich.

Star Wars is a clear influence – one bar scene feels like it takes place on Tatooine – and tonally it occasionally feels (distantly) like Alfred Bester's *The Stars My Destination*. But guess what neither of those properties did? Celebrate Nazis.

Sam Ashurst

i Victor Gischler has also written *X-Men* and *Deadpool* comics, and is currently on Buffyverse title *Angel & Faith*.

WHSmith

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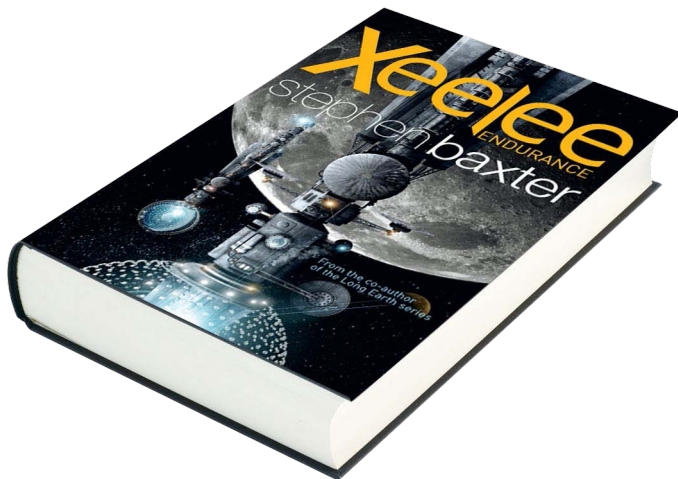


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BOOKS



XEELEE: ENDURANCE

A marathon SF saga



► **RELEASED 17 SEPTEMBER**

448 pages | Hardback/Ebook

► Author Stephen Baxter

► Publisher Gollancz

✚ **Spanning several billion years**, the *Xeelee Sequence* is one of the most ambitious series in science fiction. This impressive collection is a fine introduction to Baxter's fascinating, complex world. Most of them previously published over the past decade, the book's 11 entries have been edited and chronologically ordered, with explanatory notes in-between that fill in the greater context for newcomers.

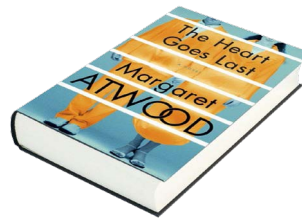
Opener "Return To Titan" is an intriguing but slightly overlong heist thriller that takes place on Saturn's largest moon, as a band of adventurers go in search of hidden bounty. Forced to commit a terrible crime, their actions have resonances for much of what follows. With shades of the Middle East crisis, the descendants of illegal settlers on a far-off planet are threatened with displacement in "Starfall". A similar political subtext is explored just as effectively in "Endurance" – the only story unique to this collection – in which Earth is occupied by ruthless alien race the Qax. But while the themes are familiar,

there are plenty of variations in its scenario, which centres on the construction of a revolutionary interstellar craft.

While the longer pieces tie in more closely with the larger narrative arcs of the novels, the shorter entries centre on more personal journeys, and are all the more affecting for it. The poignant "Remembrance" lingers long in the memory; it focuses on the solitary member of an amnesiac society who hasn't forgotten what happened before the Earth was the subject of another alien invasion.

Set in a far-flung future, the final few offerings read more like fantasy than space opera, with their feudal-style kingdom that no longer understands the scientific marvels of the past. Read individually, the stories are engrossing enough, but it's the wider picture they collectively paint that really proves rewarding, as humanity goes from being subjugated to becoming intergalactic conquerors themselves. The *Xeelee* themselves mostly take a backseat, but this richly detailed collection adds up to considerably more than the sum of its parts. **Stephen Jewell**

i The spaceship in "Endurance" is named after the vessel explorer Ernest Shackleton used to sail to Antarctica in 1914.



THE HEART GOES LAST

Doing-time share



► **RELEASED 24 SEPTEMBER**

304 pages | Hardback/Ebook

► Author Margaret Atwood

► Publisher Bloomsbury

✚ **One of the most literary SF** writers, Margaret Atwood has notoriously denied writing sci-fi at all (preferring the term "speculative fiction"). Whether it's biological disaster, widespread infertility or mass unemployment, she has a talent for looking into the more worrying possibilities of our future and examining just how humanity would cope – or not.

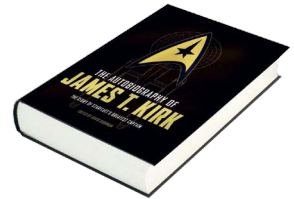
Recession has left Charmaine and Stan homeless. So when they have a chance to join a town that guarantees a house and job for every resident, it's easy to put misgivings aside. In Consilience, inmates spend alternate months living in an idyllic community, and in Positron prison, sleeping in a cell and rolling up their orange jumpsuit sleeves to earn their keep. It seems like such a simple solution to society's problems – but of course things are never that easy...

This is a portrait of a future that feels all too real, and Charmaine and Stan, with their faltering marriage, are often unlikeable, but still relatable. At times it feels like a tick-list of "bad things" – social cleansing, sex slavery, organ harvesting – and the ending seems a little contrived, but this is a powerful novel that shows us the worst excesses of where our society could lead. **Rhian Drinkwater**

i Atwood is working on a book for a series of reimaginings of Shakespeare. Hers is based on *The Tempest*.

BULLET TIME

A BOOK IN BULLET POINTS



THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF JAMES T KIRK

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

268 pages | Hardback/Ebook

► Author David A Goodman

► Publisher Titan Books

- (Original-timeline) Kirk looks back on his life.
- Works best in the sections on his childhood, Starfleet Academy years and early career, and when recounting moments like when he and Bones first met Spock.
- Gets less interesting once it has to describe TV/movie scenes fans know backwards.
- Sometimes swerves this by focusing as much on the *aftermath* of dramatic events – like, say, Kirk conducting Khan's wedding post-"Space Seed".
- The authorial voice doesn't feel authentically Kirk – it's quite earnest and regretful, with little trace of his sense of humour.
- Trying to work out what's established lore and what's the author's invention can be tricky – feels like footnotes should explain.





ZEROES

Triple talent team-up

★★★★★

► **RELEASED 24 SEPTEMBER**

560 pages | Paperback/Ebook

► Authors Scott Westerfeld, Margo

Lanagan, Deborah Biancotti

► Publisher Simon & Schuster

Seasoned YA author

Scott Westerfeld says he and his two co-writers spent a good two years thrashing out the superpowers in this new trilogy. It was worth the effort. Not only are they refreshingly different but it feels like there's an underlying rationale behind them.

The result is a gripping tale of a fractured group of six Californian teens, all born in 2000 (lots of zeroes y'see), reluctantly bonding together into a "superteam" under a guy whose power may just be compelling them to. All the powers are passive – a guy who everyone forgets when he's not there, a girl who can control the mood of crowds, a guy with a voice that can win people over – which means they aren't a full-on fighting outfit, but they're more effective as a team.

The plot is deliberately low-key – drugs and bank robbers rather than supervillains – as the book concentrates instead on how the teens interact and cope with their abilities. It's full of wit, clever plotting and vivid characters, though it does feel slightly flaccid in places, with the teens a little too eager to over-analyse themselves, and repeatedly going over the same ground. Then again, isn't that what teenagers do? **Dave Golder**

i This isn't the only book called *Zeroes* out this month – there's also a cyber-espionage thriller by Chuck Wendig.



DREAMLAND

Sleep walking

★★★★★

► **RELEASED 24 SEPTEMBER**

330 pages | Hardback/Ebook

► Author Robert L. Anderson

► Publisher Hodder & Stoughton

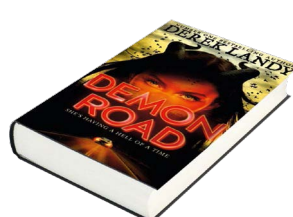
Dreams can be tricky things

to get right in fiction – it's easy to fill them with clunky, obvious metaphors, but if dreams get too disconnected from reality they can feel meaningless and irrelevant. Fortunately, it's a line that this YA debut walks well, creating a world in which individuals' dreams and memories lead into a fantastical realm of both wonder and terror.

Dea has walked in other people's dreams since she was six years old. Her mother, also a walker, has taught her the rules: never change the dream, never walk the same person's dream more than once, and never be seen. Otherwise the monsters could find her. But she can't resist the lure of her new friend Connor's dreams – and Connor, witness to a family tragedy as a child, has some real monsters of his own.

With a well-developed dream world and mythology combined with a compelling "real world" mystery and monsters to uncover, *Dreamland* is an easy-to-read book with likeable characters that feels just too slight to raise it above average. It's a good examination of just how powerless a teenager can feel in any reality, and the freedom they can find when they reject the choices they're given, but it won't leave any lasting impression once you've closed the pages. **Rhian Drinkwater**

i Want to try before you buy? Read a chapter of *Dreamland* (chapter five, confusingly) at <http://bit.ly/dreamch5>.



DEMON ROAD

Horny road-tripping

★★★★★

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

512 pages | Hardback

► Author Derek Landy

► Publisher HarperCollins

You may know Derek

Landy from his hugely popular *Skulduggery Pleasant* series, but now he's taking a new road: a mysterious, supernatural highway that leads across the USA, like a spooky Route 66.

The star of this new trilogy is Amber, a teenager who first discovers that she can turn into a demon, and then, shortly after, that her parents want to eat her. Awkward. Escaping down the Demon Road, she learns to cope with her angry demon side while fighting various supernatural nasties...

The story's entertaining (albeit not *entirely* original, and peppered with the odd amusing cliché – one guy introduces himself with the phrase, "I'm the Sheriff 'round these parts"), but the characters are what makes *Demon Road* great. Amber's a delight: a teenage fangirl brought to three-dimensional life without the blandness that sometimes afflicts the main characters in Young Adult novels. Her driver, Milo, is an enigmatic hardman who almost steals the book, and a wisecracking Irish lad named Glen provides truly brilliant dialogue. And when you've had enough of those three, the rest of the creatures we meet – from serial killers to vampires – make this a road trip to remember. Landy's done it again. **Jayne Nelson**

i Warners were going to make a *Skulduggery Pleasant* movie, but Landy said the script was "diabolically bad".

REISSUES

There's no shortage of books on *Hitchhiker's* creator Douglas Adams, but Jem Roberts's biography **THE FROOD**

(★★★★★, out now, Arrow) takes advantage of access to the Adams Archive – an Aladdin's

Cave of unused scripts and scribbled notes – to present some never-seen-before gems. We said: "Roberts's lively conversational prose tells the story of Adams's life in an accessible, compelling flow... thoroughly absorbing." The first in Neal Asher series

Transformation, DARK INTELLIGENCE (★★★★★, 24 September, Tor) centres on a former soldier who is reawakened in a new body, out for revenge

against a rogue AI. We said: "Asher dearly loves to entertain, to construct setpieces where things explode in spectacular and crowd-pleasing fashion... but many of the underlying ideas here cry out for more careful exploration."

In Benjamin Percy's post-apocalyptic tale **THE DEAD LANDS**

(★★★★★, 8 October, St Louis) has descended into a near-medieval

state; it follows a group of rebels as they trek across the wasteland in search of a better and more peaceful life. We said: "Has more in common with mythic fantasies like Stephen King's *Dark Tower* series than *The Walking Dead*... but the freshness of the approach can't disguise the overall sense of familiarity." Oh, and George RR Martin fans take note: his 1977 debut **DYING OF THE LIGHT** is now available in Gollancz's SF Masterworks series.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF JAMES T. KIRK

Edited by David A. Goodman

For the first time ever, the chronicle of the greatest Starfleet captain's life (2233–2293), in his own words...

First let me just say, I'm a doctor not a writer. But, having read this memoir, I've decided I do have something to add. For the most part, Jim Kirk said everything that needed to be said about himself. But he left out one important detail, for the obvious reason that he was too modest to think it, let alone say it, so I will:

He was the greatest hero who ever lived.

Now, before you assume I'm exaggerating, and before I tell you to go to hell, let's look at his life objectively. Who else in the last fifty years was at the center of so many

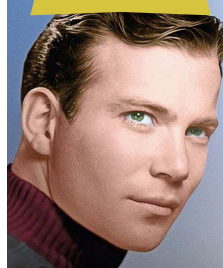
critical events? Who else in that time made more decisions that affected the course of civilization? It seems unbelievable that so much history could be centered around one person, but the record is clear. And I don't know whether it was divine providence, luck, or the mythical Great Bird of the Galaxy that determined the man who would be in the center seat of the Starship *Enterprise*, I'm just thankful it was Jim Kirk.

Though he skips this description of himself, his memoir leaves out little else, and for that reason it is revelatory. The personal secrets in here paint an honest portrait of the man. In some ways, he was just like the rest of us: lonely, ambitious, a son, a father, a lover, never truly content. Where he set himself apart is in the way he took responsibility for his mistakes, embraced his weaknesses, and always strove to do better, to be better. It is in this way that he is a true hero; despite his successes, he knew there was always more work to be done, and he never shied away from the call of duty. His passing is a catastrophic loss; he looked after all of us.

For me, the loss is personal: I had no better friend, and I raise my glass to him one last time.

*To James T. Kirk, captain of the Enterprise.
By Leonard H. McCoy, M.D.*

The Author



→ Captain James T. Kirk's illustrious career in Starfleet needs no introduction. He was a leader, a hero, and most notably the captain of the Starship *Enterprise*. He was killed in action in 2293, shortly after completing his memoir with Memory Alpha historian and editor David A. Goodman.

PROLOGUE

Hiding in the basement on the run from the police, it was difficult to see how I was going to save the Galaxy. But I had to work with what was at hand. Our hideout was neither well equipped nor comfortable. The brick room was cold and dark, smelled of ash and rodent urine, and its only source of heat against the bitter winter outside was a small coal-burning stove. All it provided in the way of equipment were thick cobwebs and a pile of damaged furniture. There were a few wooden storage boxes, stained presumably from exposed pipes that crisscrossed the low ceiling. Of course, the lack of the amenities was moot. This "headquarters" was only temporary, as it was doubtful the occupants of the building above would ignore us forever, especially if alerted by the local authorities.

And that was a concern, because though we'd been in the city, and the century, for less than ten minutes, I'd already managed to break the law. When we arrived through the time portal, I realized our uniforms made us stand out, so I stole some indigenous clothes hanging out to dry on the fire escape of a tenement building. Unfortunately, a policeman had observed my theft, so my companion had to momentarily disable him, allowing our escape. At the time, the crime didn't seem serious, but now I was

having second thoughts; I had stolen the clothes from people living in poverty, who certainly couldn't afford to replace two sets of shirts and pants. This was further confirmed as I put the flannel shirt and cotton slacks on; though it presumably had been washed, the shirt still carried the strong odor of its owner's sweat. This smell was mixed with traces of diesel oil, tobacco smoke, and alcohol. The cloths' "bouquet" told a story: a primitive life of hard work, its stresses dulled by the use of cheap anesthetics. I found myself wishing for some.

"It's time we faced the unpleasant facts," I said. And they seemed endless. We didn't know where we were, only somewhere in the United States, and that we had arrived in the past before McCoy. That was crucial. We knew he would change the past, and thereby wipe out our future, but we didn't know exactly how. And we didn't know exactly when or where he would arrive.

"There is a theory," Spock said, when I voiced these concerns. "There could be some logic to the belief that time is fluid, like a river. With currents, eddies, backwash..."

So McCoy was going to surf a time current and wash up on our doorstep? If Spock hadn't been a Vulcan who had devoted his life to the pursuit of logic, I would've said it was wishful thinking. I had no choice, however, but to invest in this belief, because if McCoy were to show up somewhere else, how would we know? And even if by some miracle we found out, how would we get there? And even if we could get there, modes of travel were so primitive that we'd never reach another city in time to stop him. We didn't even know what he was going to do, so if any time passed before we found McCoy, he might have already changed the future. No, I was going to stick with Spock's river analogy. The alternative was too overwhelmingly bleak, and the fact that my unfailingly logical science officer believed it possible at least gave me hope.

"Frustrating," Spock said, referring to his tricorder. "Locked in here is the exact place and moment of his arrival. Even the images of what he did. If only I could tie this tricorder in with the ship's computer for just a few moments..."

"Couldn't you build some form of computer aid here?" I said.

"In this zinc-plated, vacuum-tubed culture?" Sometimes Spock spoke to me as though I was an idiot, and I knew most captains wouldn't put up with that from their first officers. But I accepted it as part of the package. And I had my own ways of torturing him.

"Well, it would prove to be an extremely complex problem in logic," I said, then turned to warm my hands in front of the stove.

"Excuse me, I sometimes expect too much of

“So McCoy was going to surf a time current and wash up on our doorstep?”

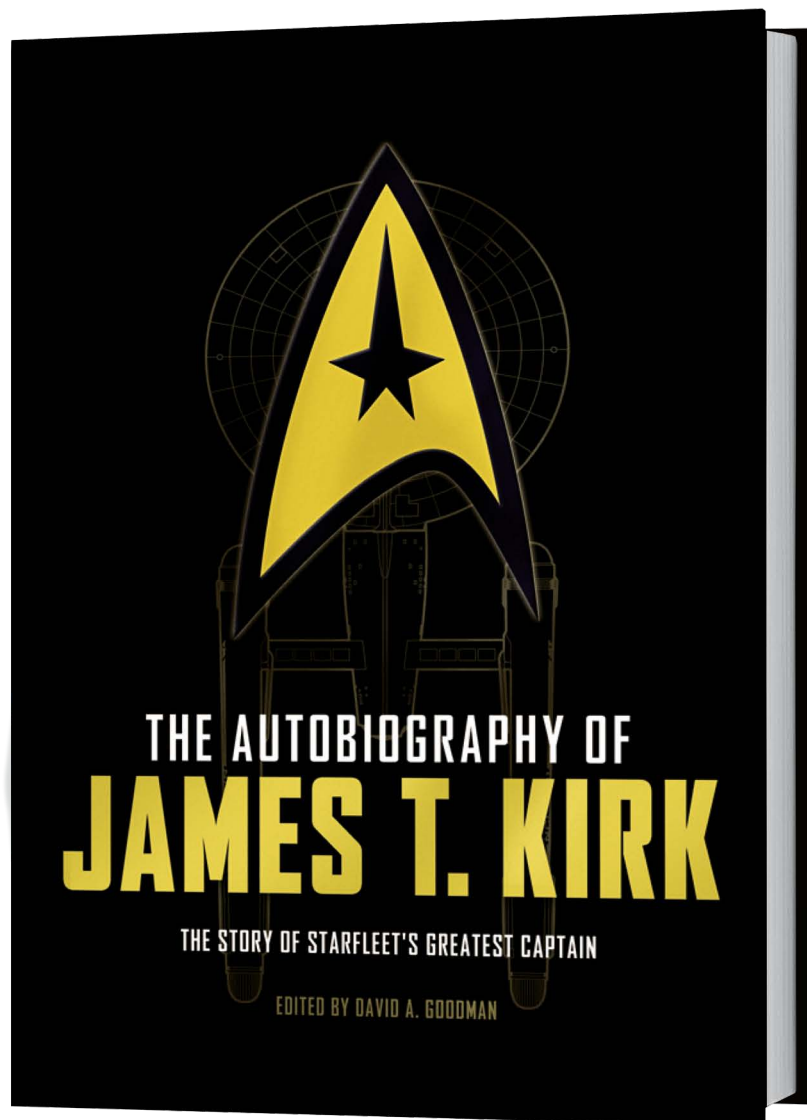
you.” The truth was, I did expect too much of him. Spock was right – the idea that he could construct a processing aid with technology 300 years out of date was ridiculous. Yet I fully expected that he'd be able to do it. And that expectation would motivate him to try. So I would leave that to him while I saw to our survival. Which seemed almost as impossible

as building a computer from scratch.

We were stuck in an ancient capitalist-driven society where the only way to see to one's needs was by having money. We had none, and if we were going to survive, we were going to have to figure out how to earn some during a period where finding work was next to impossible. The more I thought about the situation, the more depressing it became. A lot of ancient religions relied on the concept of prayer, and in that moment I recognized the compelling power of superstition, to be able to silently ask for aid and comfort from a higher power. We would need help, and there was no one to ask, and I didn't believe in angels...

"Who's there?" A woman stood at the top of the stairs. ●

To read more pick up the book now, available in all good booksellers! www.titanbooks.com



JLA: JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA

Doesn't go without a Hitch



► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

► Publisher **DC Comics**

► Writer/artist **Bryan Hitch**

ISSUES 1-3 There aren't many superhero comics as influential as Mark Millar and Bryan Hitch's *The Ultimates*, the massively successful 2002-7 action-fest that became the blueprint for the Marvel Cinematic Universe. Since then, Hitch hasn't maintained the same profile as his collaborator, but has remained one of the best comic artists at rendering colossal superhero action, so it makes sense that DC would draft him in for a new series featuring their biggest heroes.

This latest *JLA* title features the New 52 line-up (Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Green Lantern, the Flash, Aquaman and Cyborg), and kicks off with sky-high stakes as the League face the arrival on Earth of a Kryptonian god. Rao is here to save the world, and rallies Superman to his side before embarking on a campaign of miracles. However, Batman isn't so trusting, and odd incidents are affecting other League members, all apparently caused by the mysterious Infinity Corporation...

There's no arguing with Hitch's visual approach in these first three issues, which feature huge-scale

action sequences and tremendous levels of detail. He's backed up by vivid colours from Alex Sinclair and Jeremy Cox, making this one of the more eye-catching of DC's mainstream titles.

It's just a pity the storytelling side of Hitch's *JLA* isn't as strong. While there are some interesting ideas on display, the plot also suffers from some vague, murky executed moments. The story plays separately from current DC continuity (ignoring the big changes affecting Batman and

“Hitch is going to have to step up his storytelling”

Superman), and the decision to abruptly sideline certain League members for much of the action make this initially feel like a Superman adventure where the League has been crowbarred in.

It doesn't help that certain story elements echo the opening of Grant Morrison's classic *JLA* run from the '90s, and the comparison does Hitch's work few favours. There are occasional flashes of good dialogue, but overall the script lacks sparkle and energy, while the few attempts at humour fall flat. The visuals are sharp enough to counteract many of these flaws, but Hitch is going to have to step up his storytelling game if this latest *JLA* title is going to compete with other, more compelling superhero sagas.

Saxon Bullock

i Hitch says he's been waiting for this gig for 37 years, since he was an eight-year-old fan of Hanna-Barbera toon *Super Friends*!



Is the "blam" or the "kablam" deadlier?

SURFACE TENSION

Sea change



► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

► Publisher **Titan Comics**

► Writer/artist **Jay Gunn**

ISSUES 1-3 The ocean holds many secrets in Jay Gunn's debut comic. Bringing to mind David Cronenberg directing a classic '70s *Doctor Who* story such as "The Daemons", this ambitious five-parter is set on the fictional Channel Island of Breith, which is at the epicentre of a global outbreak known as "The Sea Sickness". Drawn in by mysterious coral structures, 99% of the world's population walked into the sea, where they dissolved like watery zombies.

Gunn throws the reader headlong into the unfolding narrative, with the first issue opening with two now strangely blue-skinned survivors washing up on Breith's shores, 12 months after they originally disappeared. Though Gunn (real name Jason Wilson) was previously a game designer for Sony, his former profession hasn't unduly influenced the carefully considered pace. However, *Surface Tension's* large cast and frequent flashbacks do mean it can sometimes be hard keeping up.

There's much to admire in Gunn's ornately detailed art, which evokes the work of both Katsuhiro Otomo and Dave Gibbons. While his facial expressions can verge on the stiff, he draws some delightfully gruesome sea monsters. Altogether it makes for a comic that should rise to the top.

Stephen Jewell

i Breith is a combination of Sark and Guernsey. Its name is an old Irish word meaning: carry/bear/bring forth/judge.





Airboy meets the creatives.

AIRBOY

Sky high



★★★★★

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

► Publisher Image Comics
► Writer James Robinson
► Artist Greg Hinkle

ISSUES 1-3 While the likes of

Grant Morrison have previously broken the fourth wall, surely nobody before has gone quite as far as James Robinson, who here pens an opening splash of himself sitting on the toilet.

Smartly playing on Robinson's reputation for reinventing Golden Age characters, this four-parter begins with the writer and artist Greg Hinkle struggling to come up with ideas for a new Airboy comic, only for the '40s air ace himself to inexplicably cross over to real-life San Francisco.

Robinson purposely depicts himself and Hinkle as a pair of degenerate misanthropes, bingeing on drink and drugs. He was accused of transphobia after the release of issue three, in which Airboy reacts angrily after a sexual encounter with a transgender woman – something for which Robinson subsequently apologised.

It would be a shame if any controversy, however understandable, completely overshadowed what is a masterfully executed, riotous slice of metafiction. Issue three transplants the story to Airboy's steampunk-esque World War Two, and the spectacular, Mike Mignola-style scenes of battling robots and German Stukas buzzing rooftops actually make you hanker for a straightforward sequel. **Stephen Jewell**

i Airboy's set around the time of Robinson's departure from DC in 2013; his proxy calls them "a pain in the ass".



Too much Fry's Chocolate Cream can lead to this.

MAD MAX: FURY ROAD

The road to the movie

★★★★★

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

► Publisher Vertigo
► Writers George Miller, Nico Lathouris, Mark Sexton
► Artists Leandro Fernandez, Riccardo Burchielli, Tristan Jones, Mark Sexton

GRAPHIC NOVEL Thanks to its

hugely protracted journey to the screen, *Max Max: Fury Road* director George Miller developed a huge chunk of backstory that he could only hint at in the final movie. Now it's made its way into this varied collection of four comic stories published by Vertigo, which fill in some of the previous lives of *Fury Road*'s plethora of characters.

The two most traditional origin tales look at how Immortan Joe originally started his cult of death

“Effective visuals feel consistent with the movies”

by seizing control of the Citadel, and also show us how the enthusiastic Nux became one of Joe's suicidal Warboys. The longest of the stories (taking up half the collection) is also the best: a dark and doomy thriller that focuses on Max as his quest to rebuild his V8 Interceptor leads him on a deadly rescue mission to a showdown with the psychopathic Buzzard gang.

Then there's the story that centres on the massively popular Furiosa and her relationship with Joe's imprisoned Wives; sadly, it's a major mis-step. Furiosa is sensibly kept an enigma, but the more lurid details of the Five Wives' abuse only highlight how much stronger the film was for not showing it, while clunky dialogue doesn't help matters. Still, effective visuals from a variety of artists help the stories feel consistent with the movies, and although this collection is a mixed bag that never quite feels essential, it's still an interesting extension of the *Mad Max* myths.

Saxon Bullock

i *Fury Road* co-writer Nico Lathouris also appeared as Grease Rat in the original *Mad Max*.



"I am Robin. Problem with that?"

WE ARE ROBIN

Holy half-dozen!

★★★★★

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

► Publisher DC Comics
► Writer Lee Bermejo
► Artists Jorge Corona, Rob Haynes, Khary Randolph

ISSUES 1-3 People hate Robin.

Christian Bale threatened to chain himself to the studio gates if Christopher Nolan included him in the '00s films, readers voted to murder Jason Todd in the '90s, and the best '80s Batman stories were Robin-free. Except, without Robin, Batman wouldn't exist – Dick Grayson boosted sales to keep Bruce's adventures funded. With *We Are Robin*, DC is gambling the character has the potential to pull off the same acrobatic trick in a crowded Bat-marketplace.

The zeitgeisty high concept sees a gang of smartphone-savvy teen vigilantes inspired to do Robin-themed good in Gotham. We join as they bring in a new recruit – *Endgame* survivor Duke Thomas – into their ranks. But Duke isn't exactly a team-player, even when faced with an underground army of criminals...

Die-hard Bat-fans may feel a little bit cheated plot-wise, as the opening arc's reminiscent of *Animated Series* episode "The Underworlders". And while the fluid, cartoony art mixes well with the teen-speak, Lee Bermejo struggles to distinguish between Robins – which is going to be this title's biggest challenge. If people hate one Bat-bird, it might be a struggle to convince them to engage with six... **Sam Ashurst**

i The *We Are Robin* kids will be meeting son-of-Batman Damian al Ghul later in 2015, in crossover event *Robin War*.

METAL GEAR SOLID V: THE PHANTOM PAIN

Last hurrah

★★★★★

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

► Reviewed on PS4

► Also on Xbox One, PC, PS3, Xbox 360

► Publisher Konami

VIDEOGAME This latest (and last?)

entry in one of gaming's longest running series manages something that only the finest sequels achieve: it feels both familiar and original. Whether you're already into *Metal Gear*, a long-term naysayer, or missed the boat on prior entries entirely, director Hideo Kojima has skilfully blended enough elements together to provide something that almost any player can appreciate.

There's now an open world, thrust upon you after an hour or two of exposition-laden prologue. While not expansive to the extent of the likes of *GTA*, *Skyrim* or *Far Cry*, it vastly inflates the potential ways you can approach and complete your missions. There are a huge range of armaments, which

furnish you with a huge array of options, but you'll need to consider your loadout carefully. Under the light of the Moon, night vision goggles are a must, but during the day they're a waste of precious space. Even the traditional cardboard box has a correct time and place, and the right firearm can mean the difference between a heroic escape or an ignominious death when a mission goes south.

The narrative mix of the ridiculous and the heartfelt is anything but dull, feeling very much in the vein of classic Kojima. It doesn't seem to know whether it wants to be self-aware parody or hard-hitting military critique, at times achieving both and at others neither – but never once is it anything less than charming. The icing on the cake is a cast of broad, outlandish characters, their adventures keeping the story unremittingly compelling. They're the kind of people you want to

“Never once is it anything less than charming”

follow just to see what bonkers thing they're going to do next.

It might not be as supremely focused and faultlessly executed as some of its most celebrated predecessors, but *Metal Gear Solid V* is, without question, a mission worth taking. If this is the series' final hurrah, or at least its last outing under Kojima's leadership, then we're pleased to report that it's going out with a deeply satisfying bang. **John Robertson**

i Kiefer Sutherland voices main character Big Boss/Punished Snake, and there's a sneaky 24 reference or two to find.



DOCTOR WHO: RETURN TO TELOS

Cyber showdown

★★★★★

► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

60 minutes | CD/Download

► Publisher Big Finish

AUDIO CD The 1975 adventure

“Revenge Of The Cybermen” is few people's idea of a classic *Doctor Who* story, and was also Tom Baker's only run-in with the evil cyborgs – until now. The pick of the latest bunch of Big Finish releases delivers a new showdown between Baker's Doctor and the Cybermen, while also giving us a strong climax to this run of Fourth Doctor audio adventures.

Return To Telos picks up the action from the cliffhanger finale of *The Fate Of Krellos*, with K-9 and the TARDIS both having been infiltrated by Cyber-technology. As the Doctor and Leela are caught in the temporal manipulations of the Cybermen, the fight to save the seemingly doomed planet of Krellos leads them on a trip into the Doctor's own past...

Baker and Louise Jameson are as impressive as ever, and there's also a brief, fun cameo from 1960s companion Frazer Hines. While the story doesn't quite recapture the creepiness of *The Fate Of Krellos*, it does give the Cybermen an intimidating edge, combining creepy new twists with the buzzing monotone voices from the '60s stories. With inventive time-travel plotting and unexpected continuity references, it all adds up to a rousing adventure. **Saxon Bullock**

i Out soon (on 1 October): *The House Of Winter*, first in a series of BBC original Twelfth Doctor audiobooks.



DC SUPER HEROES ORIGAMI

Perplexing paper



► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

256 pages, with 96 sheets of origami paper | Paperback

► Author John Montroll

► Publisher Curious Fox

ORIGAMI BOOK There's something about crafting – any crafting – that lends itself well to fandom, moving on from reading, watching and listening, to creating something inspired by what you love. This origami collection appeals to that instinct, giving DC fans the opportunity to fold a selection of papers based on its comics.

There are four sections: Batman, Superman, Wonder Woman and Justice League. The photos look excellent – wouldn't we all love a folded bat signal on our desks, or a paper Krypto the Superdog taking a walkies across the top of our monitor? The reality, sadly, is less perfect.

The 46 designs have a rating system: one, two or three stars depending on difficulty, but one-star designs are few and far between. Specially printed papers are included, but it's near impossible to tear them out neatly, and the perforated edge is front and centre on some designs. The instructions are frustratingly vague at times, and some intricate, complicated moves are given in a single step. It's a shame when the designs are so brilliantly created. If you want to recreate the more complex ones at home, be prepared for a lot of practice runs. **Rhian Drinkwater**

i Author/origami master John Montroll is also really, really good at whistling – he can whistle in five octaves!

It's *Warhammer*, but not as we know it.



WARHAMMER: AGE OF SIGMAR

Not your daddy's *Warhammer*



► **RELEASED OUT NOW!**

Starter set £75 | Book £45

► Publisher Games Workshop

TABLETOP GAME Games Workshop's

taken a page from the Hollywood rulebook and hit the reset button on its longest-running fantasy universe. The *Warhammer* world we knew is gone. In its place are left eight Mortal Realms, populated by the survivors and linked by magical portals. *Age Of Sigmar* picks up the story centuries later, with the realms in thrall to the ruinous powers of Chaos. Sigmar, founder of the Empire of old, is now a god given physical form and intent on reclaiming the realms for the forces of Order.

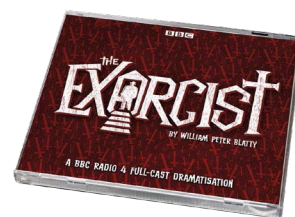
This is where the *Age Of Sigmar* Starter Set drops you into the action, hands you a bloodied axe and shoves you towards the nearest battle-crazed foe. The 47 miniatures (the most detailed plastics we've seen from Games Workshop) and 96-page handbook

that are included are everything needed to get going, with rules and six scenarios of increasing complexity to play through. The background is explored in more depth in the hardback that's available separately, adding a further six scenarios that continue the story begun in the Starter Set.

And those rules... In the last edition of *Warhammer* as we knew it, the core rules took up 50 pages in the heavyweight tome that's familiar to so many. *Age Of Sigmar* squeezes its core rules into just four pages. They're packed in as tightly as an ogre's codpiece, but they work and make for a quicker, more streamlined game. It's probably the biggest gamble that Games Workshop's ever taken and some gamers will undoubtedly miss the complexity of old. But those willing to give *Age Of Sigmar* an hour or two will discover an incredibly entertaining game.

Michael Abolins-Farrell

i That new four-page ruleset is available to download for free from Games Workshop. Head to <http://bit.ly/sigrules>.



THE EXORCIST

Doesn't compel you



► **RELEASED 1 OCTOBER**

114 minutes | CD

► Publisher BBC Audio

► Cast Robert Glenister, Alexandra Mathie, Lydia Wilson, Teresa Gallagher

AUDIO CD Adapting William

Peter Blatty's 1971 horror novel for this 2014 Radio 4 production, dramatist Robert Forrest decided to focus on priest Damien Karras's point of view, and make more of the verbal fencing between him and the demon possessing 12-year-old Regan. It doesn't really work.

In the book, it's 200 pages before Karras and Regan's mother meet. Telescoping all that material means we don't really see what the girl was like *before*, and diminishes the sense of events building to a crescendo. Dialling up Regan's inexplicable erudition – knowledge of scripture, for example – bogs things down in stodgy verbosity. Shorn of most of the taboo-breaking talk that was such a bracing component of the screenplay (there's no mention of the priest's mother, er, cooking socks in hell), it feels like an *Exorcist* which both wants to cut to the chase and is nervous about causing offence.

Additionally, Regan's "Demon voice" is underwhelmingly ordinary, Ian McDiarmid's Father Merrin barely registers, and the exorcism scenes – complete with random bursts of pop music and what sounds like someone banging a pan with a spoon – are just a racket. Stick with the movie. **Ian Berriman**

i Sound effects were used only in three ("the devil's number") or backwards (like the demon's backwards talk).



COLLECTABLES

What we've been playing with this month

1 First up, yet more knowingly old-school designs from Funko. These **Terminator 2 ReAction Figures** (FPI price £8.99 each; product codes C7258, C7263, C7265, D2339, D2340) include three variations of the T-1000 in police officer disguise. As well as the regular version, there are two convention-exclusive variants sporting a

shotgun blast hole through the head and the hook hands he uses to cling onto a car. None of them look anything like actor Robert Patrick – but then, that's kinda the point with this Kenner-aping range. Both the combat-ready Sarah Connor and the floppy-fringed young John come with neat little accessories: weapons, a phone, and the T-800 arm left

behind from the first film. Figures of the T-800 and a Patrolman T-1000 are also available.

2 Next, two more pieces of kitchenware from BBC Worldwide's *Doctor Who* Home range: a **TARDIS side plate** (FPI price £8.99; product code C3166) and a pair of **TARDIS salt and pepper shakers** (FPI price

£17.99; product code C3167). Can't help thinking they've missed a trick here: if you're going to produce a *Who*-themed condiment set, surely the pepperpot should be shaped like a Dalek? The bowl-like dimensions of the side plate, meanwhile (18cm across), make it suitable for serving up enough snacks to sustain you through, say, watching every long, long episode of "The Sensorites".

3 In combat, Jedi make use of the three rings of defence, but in everyday Earth life four defences against coffee rings are much more useful. This set of **Star Wars Coasters** (FPI price £8.99; product code C7606) features the heat-resistant heads

All products are available at

forbiddenplanet
international
home shopping

www.forbiddenplanet.co.uk
01621 877 222

Reviews



of Vader, Boba Fett, a Stormtrooper and R2-D2. Made of satisfyingly wobbly silicone, they should prove more hard-wearing than the rubbishy cork-backed variety, which react about as calamitously to touching water as a mogwai, and which you always seem to end up chucking in the bin after three months. Yes, we have mentioned this before. Yes, still angry about it.

4 Gothamites! Protect your pennies from the clutches of such perfidious bandits as the Penguin with this **Batman 1966 Bust Bank** (FPI price £17.99; product code B9285). It's a proud vinyl homage to Adam West's noble Caped Crusader – though the likeness, we fear, isn't 100%

Bat-accurate. You Bat-a-rang, my lord? Yes, you get one of those too. There are even wrinkles in the costume, which will doubtlessly send your inner Alfred scurrying to the Bat-iron.

5 These **Firefly Legacy Collection Action Figures** (FPI price £15.99 each; product codes C7041, C7042, C7043, C7044, C7045) make painstaking efforts to recreate the clothing of Serenity's crew, but it looks like someone ran out of time to work on the faces – Mal, Kayleigh and Zoë's bonces look like they've been imported from a different figure range. All come with an accessory or two – guns for the fighting types, a spanner

for Kayleigh and toy dinosaurs for Wash. A behatted version of Jayne is also available.

6 As long as you don't think of these **Marvel Talking Plushes** (FPI price £15.99 each; product codes C8268, C8276, C8267) as hideously misshapen babies weirdly clad in garish colours, you'll have a ball. Each comes with four phrases which ring out when you give them a squeeze – Spidey and Captain America sound like pre-pubescent kids, while the Hulk growls things like "Now you've done it, you've made Hulk angry". By the look of his scowl, Cap is pretty angry too. Iron Man and Rocket Raccoon are also available for a cuddle. ●

THINGS TO COME

More goodies on their way soon



BACK TO THE FUTURE MONOPOLY

◆ Play as the DeLorean, Einstein the dog, Marty's cowboy hat, self-lacing Nikes or the hoverboard in this new spin on the classic boardgame, which also replaces Chance and Community Chest with Past and Future.



ALIENS COOKIE JAR

◆ Protect your custard creams with this ceramic jar; shaped like a Xenomorph, it's sure to keep young pilferers at bay. It looks so cool we're almost willing to overlook the use of the word "cookies". It's biscuits, goddamnit! We're British!



BATUSI BUST

◆ Holy dancing digits! This six-inch mini-bust memorialises an infamous scene from the '60s *Batman* TV series: when a drugged Bats takes Dad-dancing to the next level, drawing "groovy" V-shapes across his eyes as he cuts a rug in a club.

Photography by Olly Curtis



Doc Yewll still has the bedside manner of Anne Robinson.

SEASON 3

DEFIANCE

A view to a cull

► **UK Broadcast** Syfy, until 17 September
► **US Broadcast** Syfy, finished
► **Episodes Reviewed** 3.01-3.13

⚡ **Talk about a reversal of fortunes.** *Defiance* limped into its third season with an early cost-cutting cull of major characters in a two-part opener that mainly seemed to comprise people running around the woods. It looked cheaper. It looked tired. It looked like the writers were running out of ideas and hoped a few shock deaths would disguise the fact.

Half a season later, and *Defiance* is the true TV heir to *Farscape* that

it's always threatened to be. Well, bully for *Defiance*, you might think. Does TV need a new *Farscape*? The answer to that, my cynical friend, is yes indeed. Sure, *Farscape*, with its silly aliens, cultural references and toilet humour was never a *Breaking Bad* – a show you could confidently recommend to anyone no matter what their latex tolerance. But if you knew a friend who liked their full-on, weird-looking aliens sci-fi you knew they were going to love *Farscape*. It was silly but edgy at the same time. And now *Defiance* – perhaps not uncoincidentally from the same creator – is in the same league.

It is a bit cheesy; it suffers from occasional chewy chunks of dialogue; the characters aren't quite fully-rounded – they're about 2.75-dimensional. (That's excepting the show's alien Lady Macbeth, Stahma, who's not so much three-dimensional as a tesseract.) But when it's firing on all cylinders *Defiance* can deliver episodes that leave your jaw on the floor or you punching the air.

And that cull? While, yes, we lost some good actors, by episode four you hardly miss them. Instead the show was dealing with a new enemy, a rogue Castithan leading a group of rebels to take the town of

ZOOM IN



BEST EPISODE ▲

→ "My Name Is Datak Tarr And I Have Come To Kill You" (3.08). Grim, grim, grim, then a punch-the-air twist and a half.

TRIVIA

→ The biomen in "Dead Air" are named John, Paul, George and Ringo. Nolan even asks them if they're having a reunion.

EASTER EGG

→ Linda Hamilton actually says "Come with me if you want to live" in "The Broken Bough". Yes, they do go there, sadly...

DID YOU SPOT?

→ The book Nolan is reading in "The Bough Breaks" (a fanciful, pulpy retelling of Irida's heroics) repeats the same four to five sentences over and over.

BEST MOMENT ▼

→ Datak Tarr chopping off his own (booby-trapped) arm and scarpering before it blows up. Great use of The Doors' "When The Music's Over" too.





"Well, hah! I've had an episode named after me!"

Defiance. Blackmailing the Tarrs into acting as spies inside the town, the bad guys blow up the famous St Louis arch that dominated Defiance, a wonderful image that's been reflected in the show's title clip from then on.

Meanwhile some new über-aliens, the Omek, who dislike the Votan Collective, turn up to cause trouble. Luckily most of them are asleep in orbit, leaving a father/daughter spearhead to bring some trusty perviness to the show – yes, they snog each other, when they're not bickering or eating other people's faces off. Literally.

To be honest, it's not much of an arc plot but *Defiance* uses it as the basis to mine some great drama out of its characters. There are some effective moments for Nolan (whose past is catching up with him), Irisa (who grows scared of killing just as an adoring public starts elevating her to legendary warrior status) and the Tarrs (who are more duplicitous than ever). There's a great cameo for season three's slimey Nile Pottinger. The new baddie, Rahm Tahk, has an MO that suggests he owns *Game Of Thrones* boxsets (he

“ Sadly, *Defiance* still feels like an all-too-well-kept secret ”

may well do; he certainly owns David Bowie CDs). And if nothing else grabs you there's Doc Yewll's reliable acid snark.

But best of all, it's rarely predictable. Never more so than in the episode "My Name Is Datak Tarr And I Have Come To Kill You" which is one of the finest 45 minutes of drama you'll see on TV this year.

Sadly, *Defiance* still feels like an all-too-well-kept secret, and there's the whiff of cancellation in the air (we hope our olfactory sense deceives us). At least for those of us in on the secret, if it is given the chop it's ending on a high. And if there's a season four... result! **Dave Golder**



Nolan and Irisa hide from some Doc Yewll snark.

★ BEST IN SHOW ★

The characters who make TV great



TOM CHANDLER

The captain of *The Last Ship*

► UK Broadcast Sky 1, Sundays ► US Broadcast TNT, finished

⚡ *The Last Ship* isn't morally challenging like some shows. There's no dubious motives, no Machiavellian scheming and certainly no question who the good guys are. You can recognise them because they're all fairly good looking and aboard the not-actually-last ship, the USS Nathan James.

And no one on board is more morally upright (or handsome) than Captain Tom Chandler, a by-the-books hero with a jawline so well sculpted you could use it as an argument for intelligent design. Played by Eric Dane, this gun-toting, freedom-loving navy captain is quite possibly the most lawful good man on television. And that's what makes the character great.

Every week on shows like *The Walking Dead* and *Game Of Thrones* you're forced to make excuses for bad actions by characters you like. It can be quite taxing constantly finding yourself cheering on ruthless murderers. Not so

with Chandler, as all he wants to do is put the world to rights, one patriotic mission at a time. Which he does by leading from the front, like a fearless captain should. It's a little bit Kirk.

He won't shoot first and ask questions later, he'll make a considered decision based upon the intelligence his loyal crew have gathered. He defends the weak, keeps the strong humble and will go toe-to-toe with any bad guy, including an apocalyptic plague. He sacrifices his wife and children's safety so that he can save everyone else.

No it's not particularly sophisticated, but that's not always important. Sometimes you want to sit back, relax, and trust that the story you're watching has a hero, and you're not slightly cracked for liking them.

He's selfless, charismatic and more American than a bald eagle carrying a star-spangled banner. And we love him for that.

Bridie Roman

Look – just watch it, okay. It'll make sense.

SERIES 2

YONDERLAND

Continuing the hilarious adventures of Debb-ay

► UK Broadcast Sky 1, finished
► US Broadcast TBC
► Episodes Reviewed 2.01-2.08

❖ **The jokes fly so thick and fast** in Sky 1's bonkers puppet show that you just can't keep up with them all. A French resistance leader named Le Fox, so named because he's cunning and likes to knock over bins. A reporter turning to the camera and announcing, "Hello, I'm Huey Lewis and this is the news." A sign warning that "Walls have ears" hung next to a wall sporting a giant ear. We could go on, but that would spoil your enjoyment of discovering these gags for yourself, and the last thing we want to do is spoil *Yonderland* for anyone.

This is, hands down, one of the best shows on British TV right

now. Channelling everything from the obvious – *The Muppets* – to *Monty Python* and *The Mighty Boosh*, its biggest influence is *Horrible Histories*, namely because the same team are behind both shows. As any kid will tell you, *Horrible Histories* was laugh-out-loud funny, with slapstick humour, witty puns and characters playing numerous roles without a thought for their own dignity; *Yonderland* is the same, only it's set in another world (and, er, Birmingham).

Debbie (Martha Howe-Douglas) is the ordinary mum who flits between Brum and *Yonderland* as she tries to keep the strange land safe from her evil twin, Imperatrix, while the residents of the bizarre world bicker, fight and backstab around her. As with any show with long-running gags, the

more you've seen, the funnier it is – such as the Elder who insists on removing his clothes each episode, or the way Debbie's name is constantly mispronounced. While a lot of the plotting and humour is aimed at children, there are wonderful nods to the adults watching, too: *Star Wars* references abound, for example, while a kangaroo looking after orphans is named Nanny La Roo. Meanwhile, the design of *Yonderland* itself throws in everything from full-on steampunk to the kind of muddy peasants you'd find in *Horrible Histories*.

But analysing *Yonderland* seems to defeat the objective, which is to make us laugh... and it's possible that no show airing right now has such a joke-to-giggle-aloud ratio. Bloomin' brilliant. **Jayne Nelson**

ZOOM IN



BEST MOMENT ▲

→ Hard, but we reckon it's episode six's impromptu song about opening a door, done in full-on Kraftwerk style by Imperatrix's evil guards. Genius.

TRIVIA

→ The show deliberately keeps CGI to a minimum to help sell the other visual gags, which means all the creatures are hand-made.

NEED TO KNOW

→ The *Horrible Histories* team behind *Yonderland* have also made an equally hilarious film about Shakespeare's life – *Bill* hits cinemas on 18 September.

IT'S WOSSISNAME!

→ Tony Head pops up (2.07) as Debbie's father-in-law, while Mackenzie Crook appears here and there as Debbie's long-lost dad.

DID YOU SPOT? ▼

→ One market stall features a guy (dressed like Sharpe) selling Sean's Beans. "Get yer bastard beans!" he yells. Maybe next series they'll do a gag about the guy dying in every episode...





LINE UP

The month's most quotable dialogue

JOHN JAQOBIS

"I'm Johnny Jaqobis, stop licking my partner."

Killjoys,
Episode 1.10



VASILY FET

"They say one out of every four people are mentally unstable."



NORA MARTINEZ

"Luckily there's only three of us."

VASILY FET

"Not unless you include my invisible friend Donny."



The Strain,
Episode 2.04

ROBOT 1

"Where did you get the egg?"



ROBOT 2

"Honestly? From the bum of a bird."



Yonderland,
Episode 2.04

NICK CLARK

"I really don't want to be insane."

Fear The Walking Dead, Episode 1.01



SCRIPT EASE

A TV season distilled

SEASON 3

UNDER THE DOME

Invasion of the ideas snatchers



► UK Broadcast Channel 5, Mondays

► US Broadcast CBS, finished

► Episodes Reviewed 3.01-3.12

BARBIE

We've escaped the Dome! Life is so good now!

JOE

We're all so happy. The last year feels like a dream since the Dome came down.

NORRIE

Has anybody else seen the last season of *Lost*? You know the crap one with parallel lives...?

MYSTERIOUS NEW CHARACTER

Shut up Norrie.

The mysterious new character is Christine. She seems to be part of everybody's life, guiding them towards...

BIG JIM (still under the Dome)

Cancellation?

CHRISTINE

No, an even more

convoluted arc plot.

BIG JIM

Looking at this cave full of pods containing the rest of the cast, it's more *Invasion Of The Body Snatchers*. Let's pull the plug, Julia.

Julia - who also never went to Dreamland - and Big Jim free the rest of the cast. They are pissed off they are still "under the Dome".

BARBIE

I had a really nice girlfriend in my new life.

EVA

Don't worry, I'm here.

CHRISTINE

So am I.

BARBIE

Wow, you're real. How come we haven't seen you under the Dome before?

CHRISTINE

Shut up Barbie. Oh, and you really fancy Eva, right, and not Julia.

BARBIE

But...

CHRISTINE

You will do as I say. In fact everybody will do as I say because I am an alien entity and I will control everyone who was in a pod!

Bwaaa-hahahahahaha!

BARBIE

But hang on. I'm the show's hero. I can't act like a tit the whole season.

BIG JIM

Oh dear god, please do. We might actually get cancelled then...

There follows umpteen episodes of Christine and Eva turning the townsfolk into zombies while Big Jim walks his dog and Julia keeps her hair glossy so she can win back Barbie.

JULIA (around episode eight)

I think something exciting is going to happen.

BIG JIM

What, that big wall of flame that's just destroyed the entire world outside the Dome? Nah, just an illusion. Like any sense of drama in this show.

Julia wins back Barbie's soul. The aliens are (probably) defeated. Surely the Dome has to come down now...

BIG JIM

Hurrah! Thanks be to blessed cancellation.

NETWORK

Well... have you noticed how we've been seeding a plot about what's been going on outside the Dome...?

ENTIRE CAST

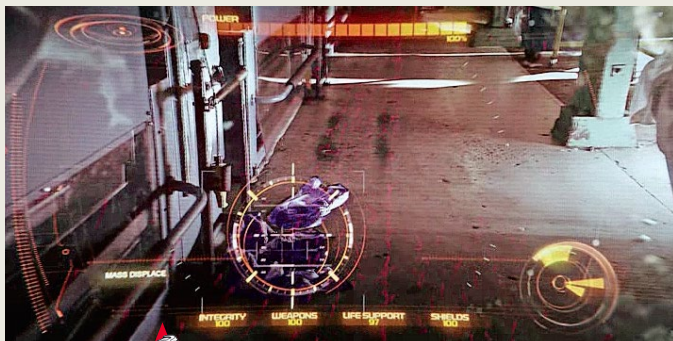
NOOOOOOOO! Our contracts said nothing about spin-offs...

Dave Golder



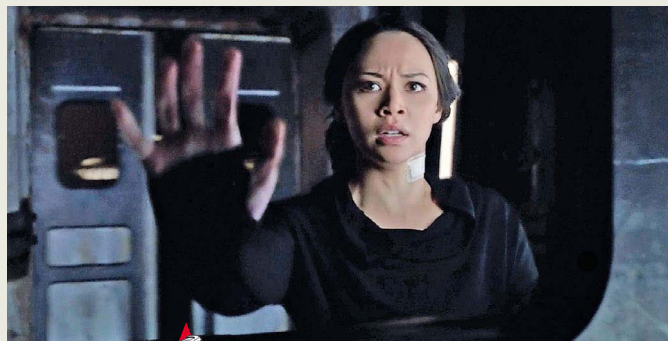
SPURIOUS AWARDS

Celebrating the silliest and strangest moments from the month in TV



CRAP PREDATOR VISION OF THE MONTH

The POV of *Continuum*'s future soldiers, or a late '90s FPS? You decide!



NOT PENNY'S BOAT OF THE MONTH

Dark Matter's Portia is clearly a *Lost* fan if this gesture she makes before being ejected from an airlock is anything to go by.



KHALEESI OF THE MONTH

Platinum hair, heart eating – *Defiance*'s Kindzi is a mother of dragons wannabe.



CONFUSED CHARACTERS OF THE MONTH

The angel apocalypse is hardly the best time to go shopping on *Dominion*.



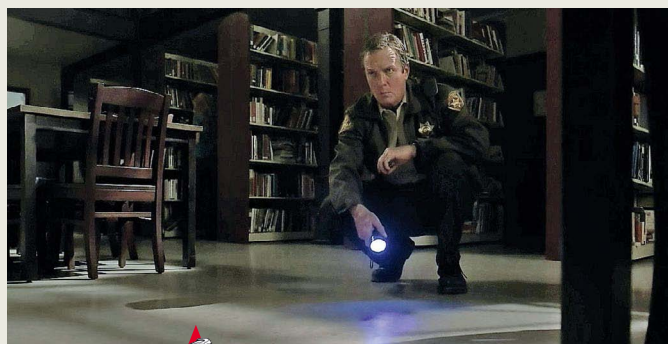
BOARDGAME OF THE MONTH

Noughts & Crosses looks a lot more impressive in the future on *Killjoys*.



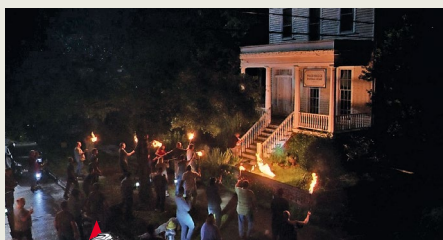
DRAMATICALLY INAPPROPRIATE DRINKS MACHINE OF THE MONTH

Heated discussion about the end of the world? *The Last Ship* breaks the tension by putting a picture of some fruit in the background.



ICKY DISCOVERY OF THE MONTH

A high school library is not somewhere you want to be shining a UV light on *Teen Wolf*. Those kids are FILTHY.



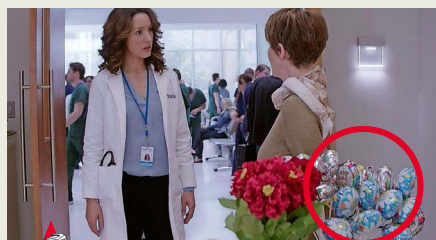
ANGRY MOB OF THE MONTH

Under The Dome's cast have had enough of their naff show.



HAIR LOSS OF THE MONTH

Corey Stoll is sad about ditching his wig on *The Strain*.



POINTLESS INFLATABLES OF THE MONTH

Strange gifts on *Proof*: what are they, balloons for ants?

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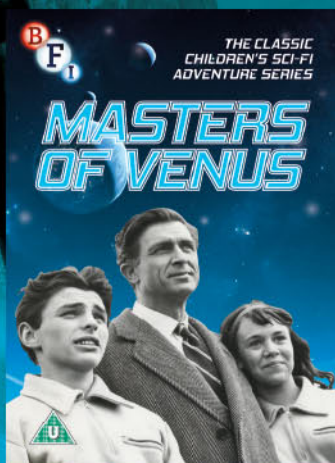
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Blastermind

The SFX quiz



MARS

With *The Martian* hitting cinema screens soon, this month's quiz takes a trip to the Red Planet

Quizmaster: Ian Berriman, Reviews Editor

QUESTION 1

Which '60s sitcom featured an alien who assumed the name Martin O'Hara?

QUESTION 2 PICTURE QUESTION

What's the name of this Looney Tunes character?

QUESTION 3

In which film are the Martian invaders defeated using a record of Slim Whitman's 1952 hit "Indian Love Call"?

QUESTION 4

In *Doctor Who*, Skaldak, Slaar and Azaxyr were all members of which race?

QUESTION 5

J'onn J'onzz is the real name of which DC superhero?

QUESTION 6

In which book do Martian invaders land on Horsell Common, near Woking?

QUESTION 7 PICTURE QUESTION

What words are missing from this movie poster?

QUESTION 8

In Edgar Rice Burroughs novels like *A Princess Of Mars*, what did the Martian natives call their home planet?

QUESTION 9

Which 1993 first-person shooter takes place on the Martian moons Phobos and Deimos?

QUESTION 10

Name the 1954 British science fiction film in which a Martian



woman called Nyah comes to Earth to abduct its menfolk.

QUESTION 11 PICTURE QUESTION

Name this writer, author of '90s trilogy *Red Mars*, *Green Mars* and *Blue Mars* as well as companion short story collection *The Martians*.

QUESTION 12

Which actor narrated Jeff Wayne's 1978 musical version of *The War Of The Worlds*?

QUESTION 13

The Philip K Dick story "We Can Remember It For You Wholesale", first published in 1966, inspired which successful Mars movie?



QUESTION 14

Name the Federation facility on/in orbit above Mars where both Voyager and the Enterprise D were built.

QUESTION 15

Who directed the 1986 remake of *Invaders From Mars*?

QUESTION 16 PICTURE QUESTION

Name this *Doctor Who* story.

QUESTION 17

Name the invisible Martian menace who were the nemesis of Captain Scarlet (left).

QUESTION 18

Which *Futurama* character studied at Mars University?

QUESTION 19

Name the 1958-1959 BBC television serial in which excavations uncovered an ancient Martian spacecraft.

QUESTION 20

Which 1950 book includes the short story "There Will Come Soft Rains"?

Answers
1 My Favourite Martian 2 Marvin the Martian 3 Mars Attacks! 4 The Ice Warriors (okay, it's sort of a nickname) 5 The Martian Manhunter 6 HG Wells's *The War Of The Worlds* 7 Robinson Crusoe 8 Barsom 9 Doom 10 Devil Girl From Mars 11 Kim Stanley Robinson 12 Richard Burton 13 Paul Verhoeven's *Total Recall* 14 The Utopia Planitia fleet yards 15 Tobe Hooper 16 "The Waters Of Mars" 17 The Mystery of Mars 18 Amy Wong 19 Quatermass And The Pit 20 The Martian Chronicles

How did you do?

Which Martian movie are you?



→ 0-5 Santa Claus Conquers The Martians



→ 6-10 Mission To Mars



→ 11-15 Mars Attacks!



→ 16-19 The War Of The Worlds



→ 20 Total Recall

REX (1)

Total Recall

Personal recollections of cherished sci-fi



THE REAL GHOSTBUSTERS

Jordan Farley, Community Editor

As far back as I can remember I always wanted to be a Ghostbuster. I was their biggest fan, but I'd never seen either of the films. Their tendency to drop S-bombs and all those edgy sex references meant the 'Busters' big-screen adventures were out of bounds for an innocent scamp who was still in nursery when the second film came out. What wasn't out of bounds, however, was *The Real Ghostbusters* – which served as my introduction to a world of proton packs, containment units and, of course, slime.

I remember the hypnotic effect it had on me – from the cracking opening titles there was little hope of me budging away from the box. What I didn't appreciate at the time, or perhaps did subliminally, was just how smart the writing was. *Babylon 5* boss J Michael Straczynski oversaw the first two seasons and had ambitions above and beyond usual Saturday morning fare. In a meta-twist the first film existed within the cartoon, for example, which helped explain all the inconsistencies.



Despite the film's smash success the show also achieved what the film could not – spawning a toy line from Kenner, which was the other driving force behind my early obsession. You name it, I almost certainly had it – a foam-dart-firing proton pack, a trap for catching ghouls around the house, and the Firehouse complete with a grille at the top for dropping ectoplasmic goop down.

After two seasons and 78 episodes the show was reimagined as *Slimer!* And *The Real Ghostbusters*, with stories aimed at younger viewers and several characters completely changed. I still loved it, I was too young to know any better. But in the years since I've come to appreciate what a disappointing change of direction this was.

More than something to pass the time with a bowl of Rice Krispies on your lap, *The Real Ghostbusters* was my introduction to a wider world of SF, and a fine one at that. ●

Jordan is dressed as a Ghostbuster right now.

FactAttack!

→ The cartoon was called *The Real Ghostbusters* to distinguish it from Filmation cartoon *Ghostbusters*. Bet the lawyers had fun with that.

→ Lorenzo Music voiced Peter Venkman during the first two seasons. Music was better known as the voice of Garfield who Bill Murray voiced on film.

→ Ernie Hudson auditioned to play his own character in *The Real Ghostbusters*, but the role of Winston was given to Arsenio Hall.

→ There were two *Real Ghostbusters* comics – one published by Now Comics in the USA and the other by Marvel in the UK.

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NEXT MONTH!
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DETAILS ON
PAGE 33

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